Africanization within the URCSA: A critical focus on how the Church Order relates to African Marriages

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Declaration

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I hereby declare that the thesis entitled, '**Africanization within the URCSA: A critical focus on how the Church Order relates to African Marriages, a**t the university of Pretoria is my own work. All the sources I have used or quoted in the study have been indicated and acknowledged by way of complete referencing

Signature…………………………………..   Date………………………………

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Key words

Africanization, African marriages, Lobola, Christianity, URCSA, Church polity, Colonialism, DRC, African proverbs, truth.

Summary

Since the advent of the Christian faith in Africa in general and in South Africa in particular, there has been tension in the Christian of African descent. This tension is fuelled in my belief by the fact that the Christian believe system seems comfortable only when it has a monopoly over what is perceived to be truth or knowledge. It is argued in this research project that this hunger for monopoly over the truth can also be detected in western epistemologies. The current context is one which asks that we acknowledge that the Christian faith is flourishing in the global South. This therefore has significant challenges for a faith that wants to consistently insist in her own determination without learning from those wells of knowledge on the continent. The question of Africanization therefore abounds. It is in the light of this that this research explores the question of church polity within the URCSA and checks if it does in fact respond to the issue of Africanization. Church polity is a sub subject within the ambit of ecclesiology. In other words, it relates to those issues that gives meaning to the management and administration of a particular church. The church order is been investigated and it is concluded that this, while being a local element, speaks to the broader aspect of Christianity not been conducive to learn from Africa.

The subject of African marriages is lifted up as a catalyst for Africanization in the local church. African marriage is an important element in the life of the African Christian. I believe that it is for this very reason that some mention of it is made although in passing and not informed by a genuine concern to learn from the African. A number of misconceptions are pointed out in the understanding of African marriages. With regard to the positives, issues of lobola are brought to the fore to thwart the misconceptions. It is found that there is nothing that positively help a conversation on African marriages in the church order. Since the URCSA is an offspring of the DRCA, it is found that nothing substantially has changed with regard to the perception of African marriages. In fact what the Christian attitude did was to create a buffer between itself and these African knowledge systems. In the end the monopoly over the truth by the west is chastised and reference is made to African proverbs and myths which are aimed ad ameliorating truth within the African context. Contrary to the west and her faith where truth is dogma, we realize that within the African context and space, truth is arrived at in the meeting of different worlds as poignantly articulated by some African proverbs.

This research ends on a sad note that laments the lost opportunities between Africa and the world. It also realizes that these lost opportunities are intentionally being ignored by those who claim to have a monopoly on the truth. Having said all of these, this research realizes that the question of Africanization cannot and must not be left to those who continue to engage this subject from a point of view of having a monopoly over truth

Chapter One

Research proposal

1.1.   Background of the study

1994 will forever remain a watershed year in the history of South African politics but also in the history of the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa. While it is generally known that this remain a pivotal year in the politics of this country, less is known about the watershed event which culminated in the amalgamation of the Dutch Reformed Mission church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa into the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. In its own manner, this uniting church declared that apartheid is a sin and a heresy. Commentaries on the Belhar Confession of this church affirmed faith in Christ as the only condition for membership in the church of Christ. No more it was declared, would one's race, colour or even culture be used as a deterrent to membership to the body of Christ.

Literature which was produced around that epoch on the importance of the Belhar Confession also touches on the subject of the church order of this newly formed URCSA. The Belhar confessions deals specifically also with issues of human dignity among others. Talk such as the embodiment of this confession was meant to entrench the call to not only recite the Belhar confession but to live out its challenges. While it seems clear that the Belhar Confession was brought into existence to address the political status quo, it seems obvious that the issue of cultural democracy was not at all on the radar of those who conceptualized the draft of this confession. This is evidenced by the fact that although a new church order was written in line with Reformed tradition to embody this new confession, not much has been done to reconcile African Christians with this reformed faith.

This is a significant point because it was Allan Boesak who declared that the reformed faith when it arrived on South African soil had no intention of taking the African worldviews seriously. This is not something odd when one considers the views that were held by Europeans when they first encountered Africans (Opoku 2009:10). In a

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way therefore it seems that the inability of the New Church order to take the existential questions of the African seriously which is embodied in their culture is at best a lost opportunity.

This observation is made in a context where there seem to be a flood of literature and studies on the subject of Africanity. The notion of Africanity is taken from Maluleke and is meant to address the non-biblical reality in which the African exist and want to converse with western Christianity (Maluleke 2001:27). Frankly, one cannot ignore the fact that the mentioned calls speaks clearly to a reassertion of African values and world views in a context where such had remained perpetually marginal to dominant academic discourses. Seen in this way, the question of where African marriage fits in academia and even theological education is indeed a prompt question for theology today.

1.2. **Problem statement**

Our research problem is phrased as such, Africanization within the URCSA: A critical focus on how the Church Order relates to African Marriages. This research is of the view that the Church order of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa remains ill positioned to address an integral aspect in the life of her adherents. By her adherents, I refer chiefly of those African Christians who were brought into this faith tradition during the late 1800s and the early 1900. To this effect, we shall focus on the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, a part of which amalgamated with the then Dutch Reformed Mission Church to for the now URCSA. What is central to us in this research is the position of the Church order and whether if at all, it had catch up with the signs of a changing time, to address the issues of Africanity, especially as embodied in the question of Africa marriages. The aspects of being African and Reformed in the case of this research will be considered with great care. This is done to highlight the fact that African worldviews have always been dealt with in a marginal manner because the western Christianity never thought that anything beneficial might be extracted from a nonetheless dark continent.

These two facets of being African and reformed have of late elicited many different reactions of late. With others suggesting the notions of being African and Reformed must be brought into new conversation especially in a context where the Christian

faith is said to be flourishing in the global South. While others pointed out the inherent antagonism between the two notions. These debates will be referred to as i make a case for making marginal African issues like African marriages, core issues in the dominant theological discourse. What may not be forgotten is that although there seem to be tensions among scholars about the harmony between being African and reformed, for the African reformed Christians, these are two aspects which are equally important to his or her conception. The proof of this is the fact that even with these dichotomies, this Christian of African descends had elected to stay Christian. It will become clear that the church order concerned still looks down on issues of African marriage, initiation etc. yet because of the fact that the African has been African before he or she became Christian, it is realized that there are issues of culture which even the proselytized African cannot escape. We must however understand this contempt for African worldviews in light of the colonial project which was assisted by the missionary enterprise to Africa and South Africa in particular.

1.3. **Hypothesis**

The current context provides us with opportunities of looking afresh at what it means to be African and Christian. A number of monographs and research Masters' dissertations have been written in the last ten years in which the issues of being African are argued in a positive light when brought into dialogue with the Christian faith. It is also clear that the Christian faith is gravitating towards the global South. All these justify calls for a platform to debate the issues of being African and Christian. Since in the Reformed tradition the Church order is placed not on par with the bible, this justifies opportunities to challenge the standing attitudes of marriage and to bring them in line with the laws of this country. That African marriage is not considered a proper marriage also has further implications on the one's participation in Holy Communion and baptism. The work of renowned Dutch church law specialist, Leo Koffeman is significant in making the point that the church must consistently change in order to be meaningful and relevant to her times. In his book, 'In Order to Serve: An ecumenical introduction to Church polity', Koffeman goes to the heart of the Reformed tradition to make his case for the change that is constantly needed in the church.

For this reason, these sacraments have lost their traditional meaning since they came to be used to safeguard compliance on the part of the new adherents of the Christian faith. An example of this can be used when children who were born from parents who did not get married in the church, are prevented from being baptized and consequently their parents are barred from participating in Holy Communion. According to the church order, lobola is still not perceived to be an acceptable and orderly form of marriage, hence this attitude meted out against those and their offspring who did not get married according to western Christian standards. Even in situations where parents are forced to leave the rural areas in search of a better life, grandparents who usually are entrusted as custodians of the offspring of absent parents are equally prevented from acting as guardians with rights for ensuring that children are in fact baptized. For this reason, it becomes clear that sacraments are still used as a means of control within the URCSA.

It is therefore significant that the original understanding of baptism must be explored. At the same time we need to look at the dogmatic issues which are used to ensure that there is cohesion in the local church. This research is of the view that the first attempt must be to bring culture in to dialogue with this faith and from there move to reconcile the sacraments to their true and original meaning. While the sacraments may be used to better understand the significance of moral cohesion for any society, it is equally important for many to realize that the fact that African marriages are taken as second class types of marriages compounds the problem even more. A debate between Christian life and traditional African life therefore abounds. This attitude can partly be arrested by opening the debate on the perceptions of Africa and her people. This is a conversation that must take into account reasons why a confession such as the Belhar confession, albeit lifted up as an ideal confession also globally, is still silent on the question of Africa.

1.4. **Literature survey and methodology**

This research will take the approach of literature survey. This suggests that the most significant contributions to the subject of African and church order will be consulted. It is important to note that there are two aspects to this research. This can already be seen in the overview of this research as suggested. The first part refers to the notion of Reformedness. This includes issues of the historicity of the reformed faith tradition

in South Africa. Since this research is undertaken by a reformed Christian from the URCSA background, it will be inevitable that we refer to the historicity of this member of the Dutch Reformed family. The church order is considered the constitution of the URCSA. It is the standards that inform a particular conduct for those who pledges alliance to the URCSA. Church polity on its turn refers to the means of ensuring that practices are done in accordance to the standards prescribed in the church order. Put differently, church polity refers simple to church laws.

The issue of the Belhar confession will therefore be highlighted as a significant element in this discourse. This is done to check to which extend a transformed church such as the URCSA has changed to the extent of dealing meaningfully with African worldviews, and specifically the question of African marriage. The other aspect of this research refers to the question of Africa. This includes such concepts such as Africanity, Africanness, African worldviews etc. more specifically, the African worldview that we wish to probe in this research is the question of African marriage. A litany of this worldview will be entertained to see the reasons that made this subject remain such a marginal subject even within a democratic context as we have today. A number of literatures already consulted in this regard; the works of Van der Merwe, Cone, Baloyi and others will be consulted. This is done to locate the issue of church order of the URCSA. The decisions of general synodical meetings of the Belhar confession adopted as a confession which must embody the church order will be engaged with. On the second aspect of Africa, the works of Maluleke, Nsereko, Shope and others will be consulted. The church order of the NGKA (1964), (1984), as well as (1988), will be used. The latest church order of the URCSA will also be consulted. It is important that these church orders of the NGKA be consulted. The reason for this is that much of those rules and regulations have been internalized by our members. They might not remember the number of the stipulation, but they know that African marriage is frowned upon by the Christian faith.

1.5. **Demarcation of study**

This is a study chiefly in the discipline of church polity. It is for this reason that the historicity of the reformed church in South Africa will touch on this element. Since polity is always informed by the needs of those which it hopes to govern over, the issue of Africa falls squarely within that debate. This is therefore a theological study

that wishes to borrow heavily on issues of politics and culture in particular. It is therefore for these very reasons that some of the literature consulted hinges especially on the mention subjects of politics and culture.

While this study will hint on the issues mentioned here, it will not engage them thoroughly. It does however wish to engage the issue of African marriage within the ambit of church polity and uses the mentioned subjects as means of illuminating the subject.

1.6. **Future worth of study**

As mentioned, there is yet to be a meaningful study in the URCSA that relates issues of church polity with the African realities of her adherents. We cannot blame our predecessors, yet in a context where literature is in agreement that Christianity is flourishing in Africa and Asia; we dare not continue to do things as if nothing has changed. It is hoped that this study might be developed further in the near future. Additionally, it is also hope that the findings might be used to counsel major meetings of the URCSA on this question of African marriages. It needs to be remembered that the issue of African marriage is but only an issue within the broad spectrum of African worldviews. Therefore must still needs to be done on the subject of African worldviews which are many and varied. However, for the purpose of this study, and as indicated in the demarcation, I shall confine myself simply to the issue of African marriages and how better the church order might start a conversation of taking this matter seriously in its theological reflection.

Chapter Two

The Historicity of the Church order in the URCSA

2.1. Introduction to the historicity of Reformed polity

The Reformed church apart from its theological heritage is known also for its conservative way of asserting truth. Reformed church polity here is seen as an institute that holds and vests power for church governance that enables the day to day running of the church. Safe guarding from opposition and its dogmas entailed in church polity. Church polity in the Reformed church is instrumental in the idea of church and state. This chapter seeks to investigate church polity in the Reformed church tradition. By beginning from its historical development; that has the Reformation at the centre of it. A historical era that characterizes the breaking way from papal power politically and ecclesiastically. Church polity then automatically becomes an area of interest in today's context as well as in the past. But what is fundamental is the influences involved in the formulation and conceptualisation of church polity and how it translates in various context coupled with its practice.

This chapter seeks to capture the tenets of Reformed Church polity and their role in history, particularly in South Africa. It is important to reflect on this due to the role Reformed Churches and Reformed theologies, or sometimes referred to Calvinism, played in South Africa in through colonialism, imperialism and apartheid. The Reformed Church's stance of; church and state, has been crystalized to historical manifestation in the philosophy of white supremacy in apartheid.

Consider the following: "Nowhere perhaps in Africa has there been a more fusion of politics and religion than in the theory practice of the Nationalist Party and the Dutch Reformed Church. The power kernel, founded in 1918" (Isichei: 1995: 25). She further states: "After the nationalist victory in the 1948 South African general election *Die kerkbode* declared 'We as Church give thanks with humility that the members of our Government are all bearers of Protestant belief and members of the Christian Church" (Isichei: 1995: 24).

Even the conversion of blacks into the Protestant faith the form of Reformed theology that informed both the Church and state sought always to undermine black churches. As expressed: "The day is coming when the non-white races and power will stand mobilized against the white for their supposed rights. So also will the time come that the mobilized powers of unbelief under the leadership of the Prince of Darkness will rise up in bloody strife against the real Christendom. These events summon us a Church today. Mobiliza, Mobilize, Mobilize to the utmost" (Isichei: 1995: 24). Often this was because these churches wanted to govern over them (blacks) something that has changed since the emerging of the Uniting Reformed Churches of South Africa.

Though what is problematic here in this context is the ephemeral impact of the influence of this reformed tradition of church polity in these churches. That usually leaves no room for the Africanization of these churches in structures of cultures, society and politics. Something that should inform the Reformed Church and theology here in South Africa as it did in Geneva in the times of John Calvin. It is from that position that one will investigate the Reformed Church's polity in relation to history and the present context. Mugambi is right in noting: "The failure of the modern missionary enterprise to openly condemn and combat colonialism comprised acceptability of missionaries to Africans, but it did not compromise the Gospel. Rather, African Christians became empowered by the conversion to struggle for their humanisation and liberation. This situation has continued in southern Africa" (Mugambi: 1989: 18). Indeed this humanisation needs freedom from historical and ecclesiastical dominance.

2.2. The functionality of Reformed polity

It is important to note that Reformed Theology and Reformed Churches emerged from the Reformation. The Reformation that saw the Division within the Roman Catholic Church as questions of doctrine, Scripture and the headship of Christ and the universal priesthood of all believers were brought up. Vischer rightly asserts: "Where do we begin when we as Reformers Christians seek to clarity our belief in the one church? With Calvin and the Reformers of the sixteenth century? With the confessions formulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by various Reformed churches? There can be no doubt that any response must orient itself in some way to these early

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witnesses. How could the Reformed church possibly interpret itself without reaching back to that period in which its separate existence originated? (Vischer: 1999: 265).

As such, it is within that period of history that the Reformed faith/church emerged led by John Calvin among others. For the purpose of this research it is important to understand that among the fundamental issues raised is that of church governance, church polity which in the Catholic Church was represented as the Pope. Berkhof argues; "The present Roman Catholic System. This is the Episcopal system carried to its logical conclusion. It recognizes not only successors of the apostles in the bishop, but also a successor of Peter, who had the primacy among the apostles. The Pope is honoured as the infallible head of the Church, as the representative of Christ he has the right to determine and regulate the doctrine, the worship, and the government of the Church" (Berkhof: 1933: 289).

This point is worthy to be mentioned in order to see the contrast of scriptural interpretation of Reformed theology and to understand the conditions that inform this theology. Furthermore it is important to speak of the Reformed Church with the Reformed Tradition that has gained them their origin and point of departure from other churches. While at the same time having the understanding that the Reformed church can also be understood as Reformed churches that also follow this tradition. Vischer with regards to this point of Reformed Churches and tradition points out:

"From the beginning, Reformed churches have been distinguished by a certain diversity among themselves. Although the Reformation sprang from the same basic impetus everywhere, it took a different course in each place, according to local conditions and historical factors. Not only did the confessions being formulated accent different points, but there also emerged varying models of the church: the order introduced in Zurich and Berne was not identical with one Geneva is said to have received, and the order developed by the Reformed minority in France represents yet another original type. Each of these models built on a different experience in relation to state and society. Each ought to have its own history" (Vischer: 1999: 266).

As such this makes it easy to understand that reformed theology does not exist as a single mode of rebellion, the first to rebellion against the authority of the Roman Church and its power only in Geneva. But there were others form of reformation that

adds up the genealogy of this Reformed Tradition with its relation to power and the state. Though Reformed Tradition differs from such groups as the Quakers and Darbyites who held in the rejection of all church government and church polity. The Erastian system were the state governs the church, the Episcopalian system that held that Christ is the head of the church and Christ has given power of the government to the bishops as successors of the Apostles (Berkhof: 1933: 288). It is then clear that the Reformed theology and its practice of faith is inspired by this tradition that exists outside Roman Catholicism. As such the Reformed Church has fundamental principles that can safely be coined as the Presbyterian System.

1.   Christ is the head of the church and the source of all authority. He is organically linked to the church as his body and controls through the Holy Spirit. He is also a king who rules over it and has ordinances instituted through the officers who are covered by his authority.

2.   Christ rules over the church through the word/Scripture.

3.   Christ has given the church power that it can exercise for its work through the officers. Officers that have extra insight and power from Christ to do the work in the Churches of Christ.

4.   The ruling power lies in the local Church (Berkhof: 1933: 290-291).

The Reformed Church government is conducted by the officers in the Church which all are distinguishable between the ordinary and the extra-ordinary officers. Under the scope of the extra-ordinary officers are the Apostles, which are those that travelled with Christ with the special exception of Paul. The apostles had a direct commission from Christ, the witnessed the resurrection, they were conscious of the inspiration, and they also performed miracles. There are also prophets who worked in edifying the church and in foretelling future events. Lastly it is the Evangelists that travelled together with the apostles in their missionary work (Berkhof: 1933: 292). On the ordinary office they have elders, elder in age, the word elder is used interchangeable with bishop the overseers. There are also teachers who had to defend the church against heresies and the deacons who help in service (Berkhof: 1933: 293-294).

2.3. Calvin and the church

But to fully understand the Reformed Church polity one should begin with the context of the Reformation and the Reformers. Obviously beginning with Calvin and the church in Geneva, this enables one to grasp the influences entailed and involved in the formulation of this polity. Geneva quite obviously after the reformation and the breaking away from papal power became a new independent state. It was a city that considered the governance of God as well as humans (Macculloch :2011:32).

Thus as the Roman Catholic Church played both church and state it was quite obvious that was a norm. However an important point to be made in relation to church and state is the character of Calvin. Calvin had been trained in law, thus he was aware of the laws of the state and its application. The need for the new Protestant tradition that emerged as protest to Roman Catholic faith needed to mark a synergy between church and state. Quite obviously Calvin was a suitable person to fill that void in the development of Reformed tradition which he spelt out in his Institute. His legal knowledge coupled with Scripture is discernable in his writings, Macculloch notes:

> "Calvin's early saturation in civil law rather than theology lefts its mark on the Institutes. From its earliest published version in 1536, this summary of the Catholic faith has a feature that makes it innovative among the early efforts of the reformers to constitute doctrinal statements: where Luther's Small Catechism ends with a catalogue of Christian duties, the 1536 Institutes makes a systematic attempt to integrate a discussion of civil government with doctrine, and it does so in notably humanist and frequently nonscriptural terms. Calvin's famous if convoluted statement justifying resistance is not couched in scriptural terms at all, but refers to the institutions of *ephors* in Sparta, *demarchs* in Athens, or the tribunes of the people in the Roman Republic (Macculloch :2011:34).

As such it would be ahistorical to separate Calvin's theology from his legal career which is core joint with the nature of Geneva. After the break way from the rule of the Roman Catholic Church it was clear to see the weakness of the church and the state in Geneva's society, particularly in the structural influencing of each other and in enabling harmony. Both the church and the state were in a state of chaos obviously due to the changes that were occurring during the papal church and after it, with the period of 1538-1540 reflecting this structural weakness of political and ecclesiastical

power and sustainability, Naphy asserts: "The sacking of Calvin and Farel along with the subsequent loss of staff with the political changes of 1540 had shown the need for a well-organized and unified ecclesiastical structure working ideally, in close harmony with Geneva's political leaders" (Naphy: 2011: 102).

It is important to note that the break-away could have easily led to the political structures and ecclesiastical structures to do as they please something which would be of detriment to the society and city of Geneva that was now accustomed to the unity shared between the church and the state, even under Roman rule. It is possible that the rulers who had wanted to govern on their own terms would have found a loophole to push forward their ideas. It is possibly this too that would have added in the destabilising of structures of ecclesia and political structures. With possibly the fear from political structures that whatever church structure that would have wanted to replace the Roman Catholic Church would impose its supremacy again. While the ecclesiastical structure could have feared politics without religious insight might lead to decadence and decay of the people and believers of Geneva.

As such Calvin then begun to write regulation for the church that would go parallel to the political and ecclesiastical structures which is understood to be Ecclesiastical Ordinances. This is understood as the period that would lead to the first post-revolutionary constitution and also late be involved in the city-state's second constitution—making Calvin's task in the church to run parallel to the politics of Geneva. As mentioned concerning the split from Roman Catholic power the now new Protestant faith had to take consideration of the fact that Geneva was surrounded and neighboured by Catholics. Thus Geneva's ecclesiastical and political structures had to work together to prevent wars and correct their disorganization. Thus there had to be a correcting of power structures and roles, Naphy captures this:

> "The revolution and Reformation in the mid-1530s had delivered to the city a host of powers, responsibilities, territories, and overlapping jurisdictions that were exceedingly complex. The city had inherited—or, more accurately, nationalized—the institutional holding of the church, as well as the possessions of the bishops, the canons, and leading pro-Savoyards. The city had also taken on judicial, legislative, and ecclesiastical roles that had been previously exercised by a similarly diverse collection of individuals. In most cases, this had led to ad hoc arrangements whereby pre-

existing political and ecclesiastical structures took on many of these roles and responsibilities. Calvin's job was to take these many disparate threads of power and politics, roles and responsibilities, and weave of them a single, coherent garment in which to clothe the republic" (Naphy: 2011: 103).

Calvin is thus called to be responsible in the politics of Geneva, though he would not replace the pre-existing politics but would rewrite them and give adequately the roles. By this approach the bishops, rulers, dukes and other positions of power would share their responsibility. While constantly making a constant dialogue between church and state. Though Geneva was not a democracy but simply an independent state, with Calvin as a proto-democratic, in giving political rights, Naphy notes:" Calvin himself spoke of "this republic". But the word initially seems to have meant nothing more than "commonwealth". Only in the early seventeenth century did the assertion that Geneva was a republic come to imply that it was a sovereign state in which final authority rested with the body of citizens rather than a monarch" (Naphy: 2011: 105). Though not all of his efforts were successful Calvin always spent time thinking and reflecting on the failures and the best situation that would entail the unity best expressed in church and state though with strong criticism of power mongers on the pulpit.

The church provided the moral basis that Calvin draws strengths from and asserts truth, Naphy asserts: "For the rest of his life, he would reiterate this preference for aristocratic or mixed polities and often express in the pulpit sharp criticism about the behaviour of power-hungry kings, even while always allowing for the appropriateness of different forms of government in different places and seeking to woo princes who might be sympathetic to his reformation. It would thus be anachronistic to call Calvin either a republic or a democrat in the modern sense of those terms" (Naphy: 2011: 105).

The accumulation of power and wealth in Geneva always had the dynamic of the rich and poor, with the elite occupying power and authority in social, political and as well as in ecclesiastical structures, Naphy rightly records: "In its core values, the Genevan political ethos was elective, participatory, co-optive, layered, and circumscribed by rather intricate systems of check and balances designed to inhibit the accumulation of power by any individual, family group, or, even, the previous year's magistrates. Geneva was not a democracy, but it was a newly independent city-state with almost

no landed gentry, no nobility of any consequence, and, perhaps most importantly. No significant and sizeable group of wealthy citizens distinct from the mass of the production" (Naphy; 2011: 107).

After having discussed the political and social conditions that were associated by ecclesiastical structures in this particular context; Calvin and the Reformed church of Geneva one can begins to grasp the coming in of church polity in the reformed tradition. Church polity that holds church governance parallel to the state governance this view is validated by the structure of the consistory. A group made up of powerful ministers and magistrates. The role of law in seems to be evident in the Reformed tradition, probably stemming from Calvin's own history as a lawyer. Thus there is a connection of networks founded by that commonness of the state legal practice.

Moreover considering the surroundings that the Reformed church found itself in. The environment consisting of their previously disowned Catholic faith, a disowning of it through the Reformation. In such it is easy to sense the vulnerability of the state that was liberated from this power through the Reformation. Thus a synergy and harmony of coexisted needed to be established and stabling allegiance to protect both. Vischer asserts: "It is true that Reformed churches have emphasized from the beginning the church's responsibility for social justice. Both Zwingli's and Calvin's social and political activities witness eloquently to this emphasis. The conviction that God's Word applies to all realms of human life is a constant Reformed theme through all the centuries" (Vischer: 1999: 270).

The role of the consistory serves to play this role with a common union of church and politics. The consistory was simply directed to political and social power, power vested in its 12 elected members. These were vested with power of punishing in various ways either through excommunication and even death depending on the crime and the jurisdictions.

> "The Genevan Consistory comprised twelve elders and all the nation-state's ministers, the Company of Pastors. Thus, the Consistory was not solely a parish or local body. It was a national institution. This meant that anyone brought before the Consistory faced on the one hand, a meeting of the national assembly of ministers and, on the other, ranks of senior magistrates. Since these magistrate-elders, especially those from

Geneva's highest council, held judicial posts, one would have been intimately and terrifying aware that, although consistorial power was limited to admonition and temporary excommunication, many of the elders (wearing other hats) held the powers of life and death" (Naphy: 2011: 108).

This was a group of elders who were well educated and articulate from the upper class. Naphy records: "...the Consistory was a local, parish-like body. The elders were drawn from the congregation by a system that relied on it as the assenting body. Magistrates and governmental authorities were only involved to the extent that they were part of that body. Much greater power was invested in superior bodies that were dominated by the clergy and that may or may not have been responsive (or antagonistic) to the organs of the state" (Naphy: 2011: 107). The elders serve as the nuclei in grasping the consistory because firstly they were elected and came from different councils of magistrates.

All this resulted in political power for Calvin and others, as the majority of these councils held on Calvin's view of a theocratic state or theocracy that will want to promote the presence and guidance of God in all matters that are religious, political and social. Naphy is right in stating that it would be impossible to speak of the church and state as separate units. In most Calvinistic polities, the consistory is very much a creature of the church albeit with the involvement of socioeconomically and possibly with the power of the well know elders. That represent magisterial power in religion and in ministerial authority (Naphy: 2011: 111).

There was also the role of the church that was designated for servants of the church which were the company of the pastors. That usually met on the continually basis, having no particular hierarchy; "The Company of Pastors was just such a body—the entirety of the nations clergy meeting every week to consider major international developments along with local issues and to engage in self-evaluation—as a ministerial body" (Naphy: 2011: 112).

In the ecclesiastical structure the pastor and the elders forms up the leadership in the Reformed Church. Herrenbruck says, "The leadership of the congregation occurs in the cooperation of the offices of pastor and elder. Elders and pastors together make up the *Presbyterium* (church council). The pastor is a *coelder*, to whom the

distinguished "service of the Word and sacraments is entrusted". In other words, the pastor as coelder attends to his or her task in the mind of the *Presbyterium* and thereby also within the congregation, thus not as a representative of a spiritual estate which distinguishes itself from the so-called lay estate" (Herrenbruck: 1999: 290).

Calvin also emphasised learning, higher learning in the church, considering that he is consider as the Fifth Latin Doctor of the church a position of high estate. With the consideration that these represent Christian though that shaped the ages, through its analysis and interpretation of Scripture, Macculloch asserts:

> "Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory: the four Latin Doctors of the Church are a miscellaneous bunch. Three bishops plus one scholar who failed in the eremitical life, which he nevertheless continued to extol: three successful politicians, one pioneer of missionary planning, one writer of hymns, and one inspiration for the Western musical tradition. Plus, of course, in Augustine, one creative thinker of genius, who shaped Western Christianity for good, but who was virtually ignored elsewhere in the Christian world. These are the men who stare benevolence out of the panels of many a medieval pulpit. All their achievements are reflected in their achievements of Kohn Calvin…" (Macculloch: 2011: 33).

Calvin considered as the fifth Latin Church Doctor in his finding a new way out of Catholicism and in the leading of the Church into another direction. It is clear from the premise that one can understand why Calvin emphasized of education. To serve on both position of the government and the church. Education that would result in doctors, Naphy rightly records:

> "Where a conflict existed was in the target audience for the work of the educators. Calvin's *Institutes* stressed that the role of the teacher was "to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers". The Ecclesiastical Ordinances made it clear that the office pertained to the school system for boys and girls and culminated in a college. The office existed and was maintained and supported in a spirit of concord by both the church and the state. Calvin certainly intended that the upper reaches of this educational system would serve not only Geneva but also the French Reformed ministry, but in reality more expansive vision of education and the doctorate was not incompatible with the interest of the state" (Naphy: 2011: 113-114).

Calvin considered education fundamental for the running of the church and the state, both with share a common bond. Though the emphasized of doctors was also accompanied by other offices in the church. Though it would be difficult to actually point to the exact which took precedence. Since those who were in power political or legally through magisterial powers were the same responsible in the church. But nonetheless it is fundamental to include education as was of the elements that is important in writing and interpreting church polity. Church polity on both world of politics and society and the human conditions coupled with Reformed vision of the church of the church in the world.

But another aspect of Calvin ministry accompanying church polity in the Reformed faith is that of charity. Charity directed to the poor a character that would then serve defines even the social structure where Reformed Churches existed like in Geneva. Naphy asserts: "Geneva was, therefore, very much a city that put into practice its theology of charity to the poor and coreligionists" (Naphy: 2011: 115). Further Naphy points out: "...Geneva did more than simply usher the poor in our gate and out another. The city moved by compassion to take to its heart waves of refuges both temporarily and, in some cases, permanently. This charity, I would argue, was one of the most striking features of Calvinism in Geneva" (Naphy: 2011: 115). Thus beyond political and ecclesiastical power that was the starting defining point of Reformed Church polity, the human element of care was part of good and a theocracy government in both religious and political areas.

Thus in having given then the history of Reformed Church polity and the conditionality's that brought it forth into the ecclesiastical and political domain. One can then observe how it is practices and what are the fundamental factors or the caricature that defines the Reformed church and its theology. Though unlike its historical development Reformed theology and its church polity would be practiced in the church and not in the political arena though it is attached and informed by politics and a need for order which was sought and to be achieved through the Reformation. Naphy is right in noting: "...the Genevan Reformation was, it is hardly worth noting, a mix of factors and impulses both internal and external. More importantly, it was powered by a level of political and civic activism and involvement that explains not only many of the problems it faced but also why fishwives felt free to discuss the

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things of faith—albeit not always with a level of discernment pleasing to the Company" (Naphy: 2011: 117).

In the Reformed tradition "calling" is important for ministry and any form of leadership position, by calling what is meant in the need that comes from one internally and externally to be minister in God's kingdom. The office is divided between internal and external calling. Internal calling is not some supernatural phenomenon but the love for God, and the strong desire for work in God's kingdom.

This calling is precisely what Calvin as well as the Reformation was about, those who sought truth due their drive for the love of God and His Church. As such, internal calling expresses inner convictions, faith, and sincerity and truth with regards to ministering in the church. That which was given as a mandated to the educators and the office of doctors who have to strive for the purity of the doctrine and the running of the church. So it is important to attach the ministry in the Reformed Church as part of this calling that if fundamental for one to occupy a role of office in the church as it would have played a role in the close connection of church and state in Geneva and other places where Reformed tradition triumphed. Further this is a reflection of Calvin's lasting influence in the state and particularly in the church; Leith rightly captures this when referring to the institutes of Calvin:

> "John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian religion is today a powerful and persuasive statement of Christian faith, although its last edition appeared 433 years ago. Calvin's intention in writing the Institutes was to make a timeless statement of Christian faith, but a summary of faith for the particular situation in which he lived in and to which his ministry extended in the middle of the sixteenth century. The Institutes is dated by the controversies of his time; by the scientific, historical, and literary knowledge available at the time; as well as by language" (Leith: 2011: 339).

To a certain degree the internal calling of a minister or to minister in the Reformed church is also dependent on the understanding of one's context as well the relation of one with all that surrounds one. This is something that is of important to both Reformed theology and the Reformed church's polity.

The other aspect of calling expressed in external calling is the confirmation of the internal calling and can be external calling of the church to an individual. Following

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from the calling is the ordination into office by the presbyters in front of the church publicly. Followed by the laying of hands as a symbolic representation of the separation of one into the ministerial office (Berkhof: 1933: 294-295). One does suppose that the ordination publicly is also a signal to the public and political historical role the church played in society. With the separation into the office to be witnessed publicly so to inform the people of the role the minister should play ecclesiastically and socially.

The ministry is the accompanied by Ecclesiastical Assemblies that are part of the governing bodies, which are session/consistory that has minister (s) and elder of local church. The classis, which has one minister and one elder of each local church within a specified district. Last the synod that has an equal number of ministers and elders from all these structures (Berkhof: 1933: 295-296). It fundamentally important to understand that from the heritage of the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church governance the Reformed church considers church polity as significant. Leith argues:

> "A good starting point is this question: why have Reformed Christians regarded church polity, or the organized life of the church, of crucial important? The first answer must be the very deep conviction that God calls the Christian to a life of obedience in and through the polity of the church. The ultimate basis for the organized life of the church is not human wisdom but the will of God. The ministry and the polity of the church is God's gift to the church" (Leith: 1977: 137).

This belief of the polity of the church was fundamental to Calvin as he believed God calls Christianity to a life of order. Both the Presbyterian and Calvin considered polity as an important part of theology. In that it helps to preserve the church from apostasy and even to present day discussion on racism (Leith: 1997: 136-139). The Gospel is important in the Reformed faith, important in a sense of adhering to it and the sacrament. Then the discipline of the church and Christians, but also polity in the Reformed churches goes to assert the universal priesthood of believers. The universality expressed in the belief of one church that is holy and follows the apostolic tradition (Leith: 1977: 138-1400).

Part of this belief is due to the view of the invisibility and visibility of the church. The visibility of the church; being expressed in faith while the invisibility of it being that

which exist beyond materiality. Leith notes: "Karl Barth in the twentieth century boldly declared that the church is the "earth-historical form of Jesus Christ", but he likewise knew that the actuality of the church is visible only to faith. The church as a human phenomenon does have to be believed. It is simply there as organization structures, buildings, and paraphernalia" (Leith: 1977: 141).

Though all these material elements of a church do not dismiss the idea of one unified church. That has Christ as one and only head and believers who share faith in the word and the sacraments as one body with Christ as the head of the church. Calvin's polity makes mention of ecclesiastical ordinances, session, catechetical (knowing what you believe as a believer), office of a deacon and the act of God through the word and sacraments that create the church. Tied to this is the role of the Presbyterianism (which express the role of elder/bishops and ministers, episcopate and congregationalism (that advocates the independence of the local churches) (Leith 1977: 144-162).

2.4. The DRC and the URCSA

It is of importance to give a proper history of Reformed and Tradition as a separate aspect of ecclesiastical structure. That emerged out of social, political and religious factors. Such factors that then would play the role which would define reformed thought, theology and ecclesiastical offices (Dreyer 2013). Another reason one should mention is that such history gives background to grasping reformed church polity and to delineate its nature comparable to the conditions that necessitated its structuring, defence and practice in Reformed history, tradition and application in other aspects that this form of faith would be accepted.

Thus the unity of its power in ecclesiastical and political matters would accompany its mission to counter attack the forces responsible for it's emerge as a historical and theological necessity for western theology. Disciple and redemption would be part of the church's governance and social standing, Herrenbruck sums up the structure of the church and the office of the elder in ministry, to point to the polity of the church:

"The ministry is a structured ministry: within it the various duties are ordered. Congregational leadership is, as spiritual leadership collegial. There is no such thing as a clergyperson who is not a coelder. The presbyterium is an ensemble of brothers and sisters who are responsible for the preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments, and education; for the administration of the congregation and of its gifts and goods; and for the preservation of community ("church discipline", "discipline of repentance") within the congregation and the empowerment of the congregation for the service to society. Both the office of elder and that of pastor allow for differentiation (the placing of emphasis). The standpoint of collegiality dare not to be lost here" (Herrenbruck: 1999: 294).

The reason of understanding this Reformed faith, tradition and ecclesiastical structure makes it easy to grasp it role in Africa and South Africa through its missionary enterprise. That saw as spread of Reformed theology, faith, church and practice in Africa. Though this time around as opposed to the commonly understood starting point of Reformed faith from social, ecclesiastical and political condition that made and informed the emerging of Reformed faith going parallel with the struggles of humanity and the conditions human being find themselves in.

Situation that which were often involving the state and church of the state church or vice versa, De Gruchy asserts: "Since the sixteenth century, Reformed theology has interpreted its understanding of Christian faith and praxis in response to a variety of challenges within different historical contexts. Initially the challenge came from Roman Catholic and Lutherans quarters. This led to the formulation of the classical Reformed confessions and catechisms. While these symbols of faith were not identical, they all showed the same family traits and indicated a common mind against Roman Catholics and Lutherans" (De Gruchy: 1999: 103).

However in Africa this is not as it is described as part of Reformed faith and the conditions it sought alleviate: "The modern Christian missionary enterprise, originating in modern "Christian" Europe, was directed at "pagan Africa and at those areas where European influence had not yet penetrated" (Mugambi: 1989: 8). He adds: "The practical objective was to turn the prospect convert into replicas of the missionary" (Mugambi: 1989: 8). Here in Africa the Reformed church came fully with its polity, both politically and ecclesiastically.

The respect it had gained in the western to supporting a propagating the uniqueness and equality of human beings and believers before the Creator is foreign in the Dark Continent. The missionary were in direct contrast to their themes through the ages. Pheko is right in noting "If the Bible teaches that the individual is unique of infinite worth before God, colonialism in many respects said the opposite, so that biblical teachings were at variance with colonialism, and it became only a matter of time before one ousted the other. The Bible-liberated African reasserted himself not only over tribal but also over colonial authority (Pheko: 1995: 78).

Furthermore this reveals their own falling off from the truth and Solar Scriptura that they had emphasized. Erskine explains: "One of the great tragedies of this world that confronted black people was that of the white person wanting to be revered as God: the creature wanting to be revered as the creator. And the creature in this world of abject suffering sought to separate the bodies and the souls of black people. It was this false understanding of humanity which made the Moravian church in the Caribbean own slaves and plead with the slaves to be better slaves" (Erskine: 1981:38).

There issue of church polity in Africa brings a twist of emotions, both to the Reformed believers and other Christian believers. Though one thing is true, which is, that indeed here in Africa the ideals of Calvin and a desire of a theocracy, expressed in church and state found ground in Africa and was practiced with almost success. The new brand of Calvinism introduced religiously, socially and politically. De Gruchy notes:

> "…Calvinism in South Africa is not a seamless garment but a patchwork quilt roughly woven together and, in some places, badly soiled and in need of repair. There are perhaps as many reasons to decry Calvinism's significance in South African history as there are to regard it as in some ways formative. But one way or another it cannot be ignored when it comes to understanding the making and unmaking of apartheid both as an ideology and as a social reality" (De Gruchy: 2011: 306).

Reformed Theology in this regard produces the mixture of emotion because of it role in oppression as well as in seeking justice, peace and equality. De Gruchy captures this well by asserting it as a liberating or being useful with it symbols for liberation. De Gruchy argues: "…in South Africa, where the dominant Dutch Reformed church has,

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until recently, officially supported the policy of apartheid and given it theological legitimation. In view of this strong connection between social injustice and at least one branch of the Reformed church family, it is pertinent to ask whether it might not be best to put its symbols aside as remnants of a sinful and heretical past and proceed to established a socially progressive Christian witness on other theological foundations" (De Gruchy: 1999: 105).

De Gruchy further point out to the fact that this formed of Reformed theology and practice is due to its culture, in other words it always in entangled in culture. A common point which one can find throughout the Reformed churches as they emerged in different contexts, informed by different situations that those particular people were living under and thus saw a need for a reformation in their political and religious circles. While at the same time overlapping obviously in the social and public domain, thus Mugambi is right in noting the missionary enterprise infused with a particular culture and way of life, worship and practice of faith in areas of politics, religion and defining society.

The main area of interest from the *Solar Scriptura* of the Reformers and the Reformed Church in the Dark Continent inculcated the subjective interpretation of Scripture expressed in electiveness and elitism of not only whites but of Reformed theology. Particularly by the use and interpretation of the New Israel through using narratives of the Old Testament a point which also ties religion and political polity. Considering the assumed theocracy of God in that particular time, that entails the choosing of the Israelites to being His nation and the exclusivism of Jews above all other races.

In South Africa and the new Calvinism as being interpreted by those of the Reformed faith where distorted. Whereas Calvin's view of Christianity transcended race was changed by the use of race as a barrier line. De Gruchy asserts:

"Calvinism had explicitly spoken of the unity of the Church as transcending the barriers of *ethnici* and had even declared that Muslims and non-Europeans (he used the word "Barbarians) were the brothers and neighbours of Christians. But it is in this shift from religion as the boundary line between settlers and the indigenous population to race and ethnicity as the demarcation barrier that we discern the beginnings of the shifts

from Dutch Calvinism as such to what was to become Afrikaner Calvinism" (De Gruchy: 2011: 307-308).

As mentioned before this point seeks to validate the framework of reformed thought, theology and the church. Thus giving the form of church polity that was given to the Reformed churches of Europe. Due to the fact that in Africa and in the context of South Africa Reformed Thought was polluted by Racist outlooks and attitudes that was legitimatized by an elitist and excluded theology of a different Solar Scriptura. Quite obviously the role of Christ also is challenged as the head of the Church. As Christ here becomes the head of the Dutch Reformed church while the Afrikaners become the head of the Africans. The blaze that had lit the fire of the Reformation and its oppression was to be at play and new Protestant separate group has caused a bruise to the Roman Catholic Church. With the Protestants going to join the oppression of humanity but particularly black humanity. A system that was at play at the hands of Roman Catholic, Van Der Merwe points this out:

> "The age of the Reformation was not entirely lacking in missionary spirit. Under the dominant ideas of '*culus region illius religio'* of that day, it was impossible for any power which had not yet extended its governmental influence over non-Christian people, to carry on mission work. While the Roman Catholic powers of Europe during the age of the Reformation had already entered upon an enterprise of colonialization, and the Church of strength through enthusiastic mission activities, the Protestant powers were still shut up in the continent. Moreover Protestant Churches were as yet concentrating their energies on their own inner consolidation and an extension within the realm of Christianity itself" (Van Der Merwe: 1936: 7)

The non-Christian people would include African people and the term Christian would have a racial attachment to it. The very considerable effort of faith through some form of evangelism can be understood, as Cox and ter Haar reflect: "Of course, while it is true that Christianity in some ways facilitated colonial attainments, it is equally true that in both the short and long term, the mission of colonialism was not synonymous with that of Christianity or indeed the Christian missions (Cox and ter Haar: 2003: 70). What is questionable is racism that it resulted in.

The Dutch Reformed Church is part of the Reformed Theology tradition with the only difference that the "Dutch" is descriptive of a specific people. People that came from

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Holland either as missionaries or as travellers. It is in South Africa that Dutch Reformed Church is known particularly in its loud and vocal pronunciations of white supremacy and apartheid. Jubber argues:

> "The roots of the Dutch Reformed Church's advocacy of Apartheid can be traced historically to the first meetings between the Dutch explorers and settlers and the indigenous people of South Africa. The Dutch of the time viewed the world through Reformed Christian eyes made haughty and superior by Holland's considerable status as a colonial power. Because Calvin gave his followers the knowledge that they were members of God's one true church, the Dutch enjoyed a strong sense of moral and religious self-righteousness. The dogmas of election and predestination encouraged in them the feeling that they were elected by God and predestined to act as they did" (Jubber: 1985: 275).

While Ritner asserts: The direct connecting link between the church and Nation is, first and foremost, the pulpit. The Church has always stood to the Afrikaners for salvation and education. These two things have been indissolubly linked in their minds" (Ritner: 1979: 256). One can argue to a given degree that the type of church polity to be practiced by the Dutch Reformed Church was based on their own dependence. The Dutch Reformed Church prior to its rigour and power had been dependent to the Reformed Church (es) in Holland. Conkin notes that: "In 1722 the Dutch church in effect declared its independence from European control and formed its own independent coetis. Then, after the revolution, it, along with at least seven other American confessions, established an independent denomination" (Conkin: 1993: 177). In South African its independence was in 1824 (Jubber: 1985: 277).

It is also possible that Afrikaner reformed thought wanted to infuse its own culture to its theology and practice of Christianity. Ritner remarks that Afrikaner children were taught in Afrikaans for the transmission of their cultural identity. The love of their own was fundamental. This then reveals how African Independent Churches emerged for their own church polity and cultural identity away from European theological interpretation of church and culture. De Gruchy rightly asserts: "One of the very reasons why the independent churches arose in the first place was because the white-dominated churches were so captive to European culture. The church cannot escape from the culture in which it is set. It has to relate to it is to exist and witness all. So the

African initiated churches were increasingly recognized as legitimate expressions, by and large, of Christian faith in Africa, and as legitimate protests against many of the spiritually deadening influences in the most traditional churches" (De Gruchy: 2004:45).

While Ritner further records: "It is stipulated that history and geography must be taught on the basis that God has given to each people it "special vocation, tasks and gifts". Further, it should be the task of the Dutch Reformed Churches to seek that these educational principles were carried out" (Ritner: 1979: 257). Though it is important also to assert that as the Reformers church polity developed during the times of Calvin, church polity included other aspects that (society etc.).

Similarly the Afrikaner interpretation of Calvinism and its church polity both as an ecclesiastical structure and as a political ideology in South African included the Afrikaner elite who occupied political, religious, cultural and economic power. Ritner notes: "Historically, Church and state in South Africa enjoyed a reflexive relationship, and the legal termination of political involvement in religious affairs was achieved as late as 1843 at the Cape. As the official relationship between Church and government at the cape was ended, the northern republics founded by the Trekkers were in institutionalising" (Ritner: 1979: 261).

Boesak is right in asserting the following:

> "From the founding of modern South Africa the Christian faith, and as a matter of course the Christian church, were destined to play a significant role in the life of the nation, for good or ill. Christianity came to South Africa very much part and parcel of the colonialist project and its role was practically a mirror image of the role of the established churches of Europe. The church served as the spiritual counterpart of the state, a state that very much saw itself as "Christian" for which the theology of "throne and alter" was natural. As the church of the colonialists, it was the spiritual home of those who saw themselves as bringing light to this dark continent, and the conquest of the land and its peoples was as much a Christian endeavour as the quest of the African soul" (Boesak:2004:9).

The main themes in the Dutch Reformed Churches were ethnic purity, and the exclusivism that was promoted by Calvinism particularly with regards to the

predestination and election. But both the Dutch Reformed Church and others reformed churches are directly linked to the oppression of black people and in the development of the Apartheid policy. Coupled with the exclusivism contained in Calvinism was the hatred towards the "Other". In fact from the early in encounter with blacks, Jubber rightly asserts: "It is hardly surprising therefore that the inhabitants of the Cape appeared to the Dutch as doomed souls and that race relations in South Africa got off to the bad start that they did" (Jubber: 1985: 275).

Boesak rightly notes: "The church identified wholly with the colonial project and could not conceive of a vision divorced from the vision of the imperial power, whether that vision was expressed by Jan van Riebeeck or Cecil John Rhodes, Willem Adriaan van der Stel or Lord Charles Somerset. The criminal appropriation of the land, the genocide of the Khoi and the San, the destruction of the African peoples as a whole as well as their cultures, the enslavement of people, indigenous and imported—all this was not only permissible. It was unavoidable and necessary for the colonial project and therefore the will of God" (Boesak: 2004:10).

It would be incorrect to want to isolate the Dutch Reformed Churches as well as all European Churches from the already existing attitudes of the white world. Jubber rightly asserts: "Even before the first Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape, the imaginations of Europeans had been filled with prejudice against the indigenous people by the reports of various explores. The typical image which Europeans of that time had of Africa's inhabitants is painted by MacCrone, "They were regarded as wholly savage, without religion, law, or morals, and hence more like wild beasts than human beings" (Jubber: 1985: 276). Their interpretation of Calvinism and Reformed theology is seen as a direct contrast if not a contradiction of Calvin's view of the church and it polity, that has to include it having to address and not be the cause of the problems in society. Boesak writing as a Reformer and writing on Reformed theology in South Africa as practiced by the Dutch Reformed Church rightly asserts:

"We showed that they had heard nothing of John Calvin's holy tirades against the wretchedness of the poor and the greed and complacency of the rich. Nor did they hear Calvin say that "the whole human race is united by the sacred bond of fellowship", which would have helped them tremendously in their perverse claim on Reformed theology for a racist interpretation of Scripture and the tradition they shared

with us. Their theology did not include Calvin's insight that a just and well-regulated government will be distinguished for maintaining the right of the poor and the afflicted" (Boesak:2004:21).

Jubber further adds (276-277) the attitudes of Jan van Riebeeck who further describes blacks as beasts, immoral, lawless, savages and non human. Further Riebeeck is said to have prayed for the land and its brutal inhabitants of the land. The Dutch were further aided by the arrival of the Huguenots in 1688, because they too shared the Calvinist creed. Jubber notes: "Huguenots injected into the Dutch a greater degree of religiosity, emphasized their exclusive bias and confirmed their sense of superiority. The Dutch and French, as they began to coalesce, formed the basic stock of what in time became the Afrikaner volk" (Jubber: 1985: 276).

In a nutshell the Reformed and Dutch Reformed Churches in relation to the spreading of the faith in other parts out of Europe. Where Reformed Theology was born is not a credible one. More so, in the relation of black people and white people, De Jong records: "the gap between what the Christians preached and what they practiced also undoubtedly impaired the missionary efforts among the slaves. How could a Negro slave believe in the sanctity of marriage, knowing that his wife might at any time be sold to someone residing in a distant region?

How could he believe in the preaching of the brotherhood of man when he knew that his children might be sold to a different owner? How could he accept the Christian concept of love and justice in view of the kind of punishment frequently meted out? For example, on August 29, 1679, a slave belonging to Dominie Schaats of the Dutch Reformed Church at Albany was sentenced, for stealing some silverware, "to receive 30 lashes on his bare back and be branded on his right cheek as an example to other rogues" (De Jong: 1971: 433).

De Jong further notes that: "On several occasions the Negroes of New York and New Jersey were tortured or burned at the stake. As one authority has stated, the Negro's "contempt for hypocrisy caused him to reject religious formulas which could not be put into actual practice....The truth is they understood only too well the impossibility of reconciling preachment with reality. A Dutch historian in commenting on slavery in the Dutch colonies made a similar observation when he declared that the treatment of the

"black men and women did the greatest harm of all to the establishment and spread of Christianity" (De Jong: 1971: 433-434). Possibly so, it also weakened the strengths of reformed theology, Biko had argued:

> "The Church and its operation in modern-day South Africa has therefore to be looked at in terms of the way it was introduced in this country. Even at this late stage, one notes the appalling irrelevance of the interpretation given to the Scriptures. In a country teeming with injustice and fanatically committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and blatant cruelty because of racial bigotry, in a country where all black people are made to feel the unwanted stepchildren of a God whose presence they cannot fee; in a country where father and son, mother and daughter alike develop daily into neurotics through sheer inability to relate the present to the future because of a completely engulfing sense of destitution, the Church further adds to their insecurity by its inward-directed definition of the concept of sin and its encouragement of the *mea culpa attitude*" (Biko:1978: 60-61)

In all that has been mentioned concerning the Reformed Church, its polity and Dutch Reformed Church in relation to church, sacraments (Lord's Supper and Baptism) and the church's universality. It is important to reiterate that conversion of black people and of all people of African descent was an inhumane act. However it is important to note that within South African context blacks sought their independence from the white churches in order to facilitate doctrine, sacraments and the interpretation of the word for themselves. Out of the shadow and authority of white influence and white domination. It is here that the Uniting Reformed Church was born adopting the Belhar Confession, Coertzen asserts:

> "In April, 1994, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Reformed Church in Africa united to form the *Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa*. However not all the congregations of the DRCA went along with this unification process. This would prove to be a major stumbling block for the realization of church unity. In August, 1994, the executive committees of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church reaffirmed their commitment to visible Church unity as soon as possible and that a suitable structure for this unity must be found. They confirmed that both churches had the three Formulas of Unity as Confessional basis and that the URCSA had a fought confession of faith, namely the Belhar Confession" (Coertzen: 2001: 227-228).

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It is important to note also that the formation of such a church does not go against Reformed Theology that necessitates unity of the church. But rather is an indication of unity in the process. Furthermore it is significant to state that the Uniting Reformed Church seeks to facilitate; justice, integration, reconciliation and that common brotherhood of humanity as such believes through the Belhar Confession it can achieve this. Though others 'conservatives' 20 years later into our democracy find it hard to accept the Uniting Reformed Church proposal of negotiation through the Belhar Confession. "Although a new climate is created by the people who speak out against racial prejudice in any sense of the word, there is a tendency to be more sympathetic towards black people as *the underprivileged of the past* than towards believers of other races in South Africa. Thus the views of the formerly disadvantaged on church affairs and church polity are often more carefully considered than those of others. This approach also tends to neglect things in South Africa's apartheid past which had nothing to do with apartheid, and some were in fact challenges to the ideology of separate development.

An example here is the approach of the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) to possible major assemblies in a new united Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). According to their own thinking and understanding of the Belhar Confession dating from the 1980s (Cloete & Smit 1984:7-10), one federal council for this family of churches is not a structure of unity, but of apartheid or segregation. Not that it is such from a church political point of view, but simply because it was used in a time when the General Synod of the DRC supported apartheid (DRC 1978:68-71). For the URCSA and their understanding of Belhar on the separation of churches this fits into the picture Belhar draws on church separation (URCSA 2008:208vv) (Strauss: 2013: 2).

The same view resonates with Coertzen, he asserts: "The insistence by the URCSA that the confession of Belhar be officially accepted, as a non-negotiable condition for unity, is making it difficult for the other members of the Family who all have certain problems with Belhar. If the URCSA sticks to its insistence of the acceptance of Belhar as a non-negotiable condition it will not help the process of unity at all, because if the Dutch Reformed Church is forced to accept the Confession of Belhar for the sake of unity, the danger is that the DRC will experience a serious disruption. That is not to

say that there is no understanding of and appreciation for the Confession of Belhar, but in the end no confession of faith can be forced on anybody" (Coertzen: 2001: 38-39).

It is strikingly interesting to observe how white arrogance still persists to tell black people how to go about in relating faith to themselves and others. Furthermore this reflects how black churches still have to subordinate to white churches that have become mother bodies to them. It seems as if then that if polity is fundamental for order in the Reformed Faiths, it only becomes more complex in relation to blacks in that blacks are continually bound to be dictated to by whites. The reluctance of some white churches in the adoption of the Belhar confession reveals how blacks continue to be perpetual students to white teachers even with regards to spiritually.

 Koopman rightly argues:

> "For pluralistic societies like those in the Netherlands and South Africa, who struggle with reconciliatory living, Belhar does have some lessons. Reconciliation, justice and unity embrace each other. To embrace the other, we need to do expiation and seek justice that heals broken relationships and covenants together. This journey we cannot embark on without the nearness that helps to develop sympathy, empathy and interpathy. And when our faith is threatened and challenged by so many discouraging developments regarding reconciliation in different parts of the world (as are witnessed to at this conference), we are comforted to know that the work of reconciliation is not ours. It is the work of the One who calls, gathers and cares for us. And if it looks like reconciliation will not take place, we remember who is on the throne, who is Lord. In Him we put our hope. URCSA and her brothers and sisters elsewhere are called upon to respond with loyalty and obedience to the call to unity, reconciliation and justice" (Koopman: 2007: 105).

According to this view of concerning; unity, justice, reconciliation and integration true Reformed Church Polity can truly be achieved and the universality of believers affirmed. Together with a common brotherhood of humanity which is fundamental in the Christian faith. Ritner's observation is proper particularly in dealing with the church polity that has been involved in matters of politics. That has shaped faith and society: "It is the duty of the state to organize the power internally and externally. In every state God is the fountain of authority and power, irrespective of whatever rulers and

subjects acknowledge it. It is the duty of the state, when instituted, to hold the balance between its subjects. But it has no right to interfere in non-state matters, and cannot dictate in religious matters. Moreover, the rule of law is subordinate to the word of God, of which naturally the Church is the interpreter" (Ritner: 1979: 262).

2.5. Conclusion

It was seen in this chapter how the reformed tradition was used to justify apartheid and at the same time how this tradition was used to challenge apartheid. It was also observed that the issue of the Belhar Confession remains a real thorn in the flesh for the DRC. While it is true that the Belhar Confession is in a sense African in that it emanates from the African context and struggle, It nonetheless does not say much about the Africanization process which must remain essential to the URCSA if it want to be real to her African status. In the next chapter we will explore African Marriages as but one aspect of the Africanization process. It must also be clear that from the lack of material in applying the Belhar confession to the African contexts and challenges, it is the opinion of this research that the said confession has not fully embraced her Africanity. This could also be because of imbibed perceptions that Africa and reformed cannot really be reconciled to one another.

Chapter Three

African Marriages: An overview

3.1. **Introduction to the understanding of African Marriages**

The concept of Marriage(s) is an interesting concept, as one fundamental factor is that it is part of human identity. In that it solely stands, traditionally, as a human institution. With varying points on how it is decreed either as a; social and divine institution. In the African context marriages seems to favour both a social standing and a divine one. In that socially it is generally understood that it has to do with; child bearing, establishment of families, heritage, leanage and keeping intact a presupposed union between; man and women.

More so, in relation to gender roles which often are divided by physiological and biological differences. In that quite obviously tasks that require strength are associated with manliness. While others that do not require masculine strength as such are associated with womanhood, it is those roles that can be associated with differentiation between a house and a home and a determining factor of African marriages. As traditional there cannot be a home without a wife/woman. Quite contrary to common belief and the distortion of African history, culture and traditions by Europeans, woman in the African culture and tradition, have a role in the [1]African home that cannot be replaced or done by no one else other than woman.

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[1] The concept of 'home' and a 'house' within the African framework usually carry distinct meanings and connotations to them. The latter expresses the physical structure, habitation in a sense, which is fundamental for people's well being as it serves as shelter. To shelter from the cold, heat and all forms of these mentioned that can affect one. However the concept of a 'home' expresses a different twist to this, in that it firstly acknowledges the need for a physical structure. Though it understands that human being are not objects but living beings that have relationships. It is at this point that it can then be seen the role of the mother/woman in the home. Who will represent nurturing of both the; children and the husband. As such, within the African structure the woman occupies a position of primacy. Fundamentally so since the woman is the first contactor with the child and also due to the fact that the woman is the first teacher of the child-one could suggest that it is possible that the African structure is stricter to woman because their the first teacher of the children, not pardoning man bad behaviour. So the woman make the African home, this point is important

As a divine decree, one must first and foremost pointed out the not so obvious, that the African understanding of divinity/the divine is not classical metaphysics of the separated Being, who lives as an individual in some abstract and peripheral realm of existence. But rather the Being is understood in relation to human beings and religion. By human beings, it has been pointed out that African meaning of humanity is not individualistic, but rather inclusive of; ancestors, elders and the community, thus African meaning of religion.

> "In Africa, "religion" refers to a widespread belief in an invisible world, inhabited by spiritual forces or entities that are deemed to have effective powers over the material world. This definition of religion emerged from the specific context of Africa, where the perceived spirit world has a considerable and real presence. In that sense it is quite different from definitions derived from modern Western experiences, which tend to consider religion in terms of a search for ultimate meaning in life" (Haar: 2009: 1).

As such, marriage as a divine decree in the African system then means a union that surpasses the couple, but extends from the couple's families; physically and metaphysically. Thus making the understanding of marriage in the African context a bond of both families: in this world and the world of the 'unseen'. I do not wish to romanticize the view of African marriages in Africa, as if they are without complexities, but rather attempt to prove their role in history. Particularly this is a necessity after the numerous volumes of Africa's; historical, cultural, spiritual and traditional distortions by Europeans.

The concept of marriage is fundamental in the African culture with its varying meanings depending on a tribe or ethnicity; it is an intrinsic part of the African society and African tradition. In that it carries with it profound elements that define humanity, communities and societies in Africa, which is knitted to culture, tradition and religion, Burke notes with regards to African customs and tradition that: "There are two further important points to be borne in mind: a) to speak of "African customs" or "African culture" is necessarily to generalize, and all generalizations are subject to many particular exceptions (in fact, there is not just one "African culture" but many cultures in Africa); b) traditional African values are currently being subjected to strong

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today as we see the buying of house, mistaken to be synonymous to a home, a preference of physical structures over fundamentally values that go beyond the structure and benefits the whole of society.

pressures, coming mainly from the West, and are changing fast particularly in urban environments" (Burke: 1988: 1).

But what is clear is that marriage is a starting point to building relationships, firstly between the man and woman then proceeds to the formation of communal life for both families of the man and woman. Lumbala points out the points out the point of difference between the western concept and teaching of marriage with that of Africa. Lumbala argues:

> "A distinguishing characteristic of traditional African teaching on marriage is the perception that marrying is a *dynamic process*, not something that happens in a single moment. It begins with the promises of marriage at engagement and ends with the birth of the first child. The gift of a dowry is a powerful symbol of marriage in African society. The dowry is called "the symbol of alliance" given by the family that receives the female to the family that allows one of its members to leave. In fact, the receiving family never stops "giving" the dowry, because it never finishes giving thank for such a great gift. In traditional African teaching, marriage is not indissoluble. It is understood that shipwrecks are possible in the course of human life: bad treatment by one of the partners, the unkindness or malevolence of one family, the discovery of sorcery, sterility, misconduct, death, and all that is opposed to life can all be causes of dissolution" (Lumbala: 1989: 71).

While Baloyi argues: "Marriage is also viewed as the vehicle through which the continuity of the family or clan can be carried over to the next generation, hence the birth of the male children is also regarded as very important than that of a female in the family" (Baloyi: N/D: 1). But another point which is important is that of child bearing and the role of polygamy. Burke notes: "...polygamy is much less than many westerners would seem to think (it varies from tribe to tribe, but in practice some 20% to 30% of African marriages have been polygamous, with a norm of two wives per marriage), it is important to underline that the main factor behind polygamy is not sexual incontinence, but the overriding desire and as it were, necessity of having children. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that the taking of a second wife is so often the simple consequence of the barrenness of the first" (Burke: 1988: 2).

Dodoo asserts though that: "Presumably, polygamy is more likely to be associated with patriarchal relations between the sexes, and this should be reflected in the nature of decision making" (Dodoo: 1998: 233). In that a men have a greater moral responsibility towards decision making, it is important also to note that polygamy is viewed as patriarchy and unfair towards women though it is important to add the view that the gender roles are important in the African matrimonial system and household. As such there is a need to view it not only as woman oppression but rather that the man in African culture serves a significant role to his wife, children and the society. It is a role and responsibility that a man assumes upon birth of a male child as Baloyi has noted (Baloyi: N/D: 1).

But nonetheless it important to note that African marriages are not only a union between male and female but rather also for the extended family, ancestor for the benefit of a community. Baloyi argues: "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. This statement helps us to understand that African people do not live in isolation. Living together in an African context does not exclude the issue of marriage; hence an African woman is not only married to her husband, but to the entire family and clan" Baloyi: 2013: 9). As such this makes clear the role of parents in marriage and in guiding the children towards that step. This does not only end up with the lobola negotiations but to the presupposed longevity of the period of marriage. Where these two families are joined together to promote communal living in the family beyond the wedding day. Baloyi rightly adds: "After the wedding, this communal approach to life sometimes leads to a situation where relatives in a communal marriage have social to the marriage, following the traditions of the tribe... The general opinion is that the African family is not only constituted by husband, wife and children, but that it includes the extended family. No distinction is made between the household and the extended family" (Baloyi: 2013: 11).

Again this goes hand and glove with the view that the children born out of that union are not necessarily their possession. But rather that they are fruits of the society. Baloyi rightly asserts:

> "One African proverb which says "It takes a village to raise a child" is equivalent to the Shangaan idiom "*N'wana ahi wa un'we*", literally meaning "a child does not belong only to his or her biological parents." The implication is that once a child is born, he or she

must belong to a family, clan or community. Since African people never left anything related to family to an individual, children were also believed to belong to the community; hence every elderly person in the community was responsible to ensure that the children in that community are raised in the respect of the community values" (Baloyi: 4).

In line with the view that African marriages are; communally and socially oriented to keeping order and balance in society. Beginning from a family union to society, what has become problematic to the African marriage institution is the vast number of young African couples living together without being married. Baloyi is right in noting: "For many Africans, the "vat-en-sit" marriage, in which couples simply live together without marital commitments or lobola agreed upon, has long been problematic" (Baloyi: N/D: 3). One could argue based upon the modern day set up of relationships that indeed it is problematic in that it isolates the two from the community, including the parents for both partners. As such it isolates the children from the community. One could consider the number that is constantly escalating of single handed homes that do not have that balance and order which is appreciated in African culture (s), particularly with regards to marriage. Due to the living together without marriage commitment, in a sense of lobola and family union and discussion.

Marriage in Africa is dependent also on the lobola there is much to learn concerning lobola. Firstly, besides the western influence in our thinking lobola stands first to show appreciation to the family for their child who the male could have asked in marriage. A sign of respect and value for both the woman and the family that child comes from. A second point which also has equal importance is that lobola goes to signify the ability of the male in being able to care for his wife and children. Lobola represents this view, Shope argues:

"In the past, *lobolo* forged a relational bond among families, and, as the older women in the community recall, it celebrated the addition of the woman into the husband's family. Most rural women perceive *lobolo* as 'very good for them because it creates a great friendship. It is a way of making a relationship between two families'. Through the negotiation of *lobolo,* families are brought together and united; the transfer of *lobolo* creates a web of affiliations that stretches across generations and urban/rural locales" (Shope: 2011: 65-66).

3.2.   The distortion of African marriages

It is impossible to separate what exactly has been distorted by the white enterprise, considering the nature of colonialism, imperialism, dispossession and dehumanization. But nonetheless it is safe to suggest that indeed the African marriage/matrimonial system were distorted also. Firstly, African manhood was generalized with the chauvinism of European patriarchy. Part of this was the European concept of what they thought of polygamy, by associating it with fornication without having a proper grasp of it and its meaning and relevance. Secondly, womanhood of black African womanhood was viewed from the spectacles of the typical chauvinistic patriarchal mentality of European men.

This also tallies well with [2]white perversion and hatred towards blacks and their women. Were black women were reflected as if they were products by whites, also because of their lack of clarity of the African custom of lobola, without a proper understanding of the purpose and meaning of the custom, Europeans supposed that it was tantamount to buying our women. Thirdly, which is a unifying point for all other atrocities done to Africans, as almost every aspect of African culture/tradition, African culture was seen as barbarian, savagery and ungodly/heathen, thus invalid. This invalidation of the African outlook was based on the view that blacks were inferior to whites in all aspects, presently the fact that African most of the times cannot consider the marriage process complete without the "white wedding", which is seemingly more acceptable and somehow more "Christian". Mair notes:

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[2] A lot can be said about white perversion, firstly that the charge blacks have charged with, which Steve Biko sought to disprove, an attitude of white stereotypes. That believe blacks were; lazy, drunkards and love sex. The latter usually is more of the obsession of white missionaries and the thoughts they harboured beyond the so called "Christian" condemnation of the black heathens. To further demonstrate this point one cannot forget the history and story of Sarah Baartman, an African woman, who truly suffered the barbarism and white perversion. Thus reflecting the over-sexualisation of the black libido by whites and that the truth is the white world did not respect the black woman first before the black man. Instead it saw her as an object, thus black men, particularly in the modern era, operate as such. Thus the debates on patriarchy and feminism, within the African context, must engage this position and reflect the patriarchy of race with regards to sexuality/gender, which would include white woman/feminist also, together with traditional African patriarchy. The reason for this is to avoid just generalization of patriarchy, particularly when viewing it from the lenses of western epistemologies and methodologies.

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"...African family life and marriages custom are evolving today. They are being changed partly through the deliberate actions of administrative or missionary authorities, who seek to influence their development towards conformity with standards regarded as desireable in the Western world, and partly by the impersonal force of modern economic conditions" (Mair: 1969: 1).

3.3. The African marriage

"An observer looking down from a low-flying plane on to the great equatorial with its huge trees, its dense, tangled vegetation, its giant roots that rise many feet above the ground, its foliage always green and luxuriant, its frightening intensity of vegetable growth, may glimpse few gaps, rare and far apart. These are the clearings cut by forest cultivators. These forest farmers are amazing sculptors. More than any other African peoples they have created those statues, for a long time called fetishes, representing men and women in an abstract but lifelike style, with proportions strange to us but integrated into a coherent whole, motionless, but always ready to move" (Maquet: 1972: 68).

The above simply seeks to signify the African life and system that has natural surroundings, and the products that come from them as a coherent whole of the conception of life. While there is there centrality of all these factors, with man and woman as intrinsic part of it, thus it also serves to show the coherent whole of the African communal living implied in the marriage institution. That is connected to nature (natural provision; food) and life for the forming of communities and societies (based on nature and man and woman.

Marriage in Africa, as a nominative is understood as an institution between man and woman. A union that is part and parcel of the establishment of a family through reproduction, it is expected that out of this union offspring's are to be produced. "The family is the most significant feature of African society, and the process of disintegration is nowhere more apparent that in this central institution. The orderly development of African life will depend in large measure upon the successful maintenance of the solidarity of the family unit the course of the modification of its role under modern conditions" (Mair: 1969: VII).

Africans have their own of doing things in the relationships between mother/woman and between father and their children which are usually from their religious beliefs. African culture is inseparable from religious beliefs since this is the case marriage also carries with it not only social biological factors but theological factors expressed in their religious beliefs. Mair states: "Traditional African society, life every other, had its own rules concerning the obligations of spouses towards each other and of parents towards children, rules which govern the co-operation of daily life and expressed and were supported by a system of value enshrined in religious belief" (Mair: 1969: 1). Further she notes:

> "The feature of African marriage which is perhaps most widely known to the general public is that polygyny—the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently—is permitted. In fact this rule is only one aspect of a system where cp-operation in tilling the fields and herding the cattle is provided by a group of people bound by the obligations of kinship and marriage and not by the relationship of wage-earner to employer. The larger the co-operating group, the greater the possibilities of wealth and of defence against enemies, and the more children are born to any group, the greater hopes of expansion in the future" (Mair: 1969: 1).

The understanding of having children in a marriage guarantees the birth of legitimate children who then undoubtedly can be heir to the lineage. Maquet asserts the following concerning the meaning of a lineage:

> "While each kinship role is expressed by a specific pattern of behaviour towards kinsmen, the group consisting of descendents of one ancestor constitutes a closed, organically tight solitary society, which presents a united front to other groups of the same order. These groups—lineages—bring together all those who can trace through real, not fictive, links, the lines of descent that lead back to the same ancestor, who is recognized as the origin of the group. A lineage can function effectively only if the number of its members does not become too large" (Maquet: 1972: 77).

This might be seen as the chauvinism of African masculinity but however it is not so, Mair notes "Women have their own share, an important one, in the division of labour, and both the wealth of the group and its hopes of progeny are greater proportion to the number of wives" (Mair: 1969: 1). But she also notes that polygamy seems the

ideal understanding of African Marriages, however with caution she notes that most African marriages were most likely monogamous (Mair: 1969: 1).

African marriage can thus seem to have family as the central theme of the union. The marriage can be pre-arranged between families, unlike the modern day romanticized version of marriage. That has love as a central theme between the union of man and woman. African marriages have always assumed a position of the permanency of marriage, thus prohibiting divorce practises. Lumbala points out the points out the point of difference between the western concept and teaching of marriage with that of Africa. Lumbala argues:

> "A distinguishing characteristic of traditional African teaching on marriage is the perception that marrying is a *dynamic process*, not something that happens in a single moment. It begins with the promises of marriage at engagement and ends with the birth of the first child. The gift of a dowry is a powerful symbol of marriage in African society. The dowry is called "the symbol of alliance" given by the family that receives the female to the family that allows one of its members to leave. In fact, the receiving family never stops "giving" the dowry, because it never finishes giving thank for such a great gift. In traditional African teaching, marriage is not indissoluble. It is understood that shipwrecks are possible in the course of human life: bad treatment by one of the partners, the unkindness or malevolence of one family, the discovery of sorcery, sterility, misconduct, death, and all that is opposed to life can all be causes of dissolution" (Lumbala: 1989: 71).

3.4. The African home

The African home is entirely dependent on the institution of marriage, as marriage serves the social, economic and communal life of Africans. But what is vital in the African marriage and structure is firstly the times of family or tradition it follows. The reason that the African family differs, is that some are elementary family that does include the extended family. While there is also patrilineal and matrilineal structures. Matrilineal means one being part of the woman's extended family while the other expresses being part of the father's extended family. Mair asserts:

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"...both the elementary and the polygamous family often form part of a wider group of persons who live in the same homestead or village and work together. The basis of this group is kinship traced through one parent, usually the father, when it is called patrilineal, but in a larger part of Africa through the mother, when it is called matrilineal. The widest group between whose members such relationship can be traced is described by modern anthropologists as a lineage. That which normally lives and works together is a section of a lineage—a man and his sons with their wives and minor children or a woman and her daughters with their husbands and minor children. Such a group is called the extended family" (Mair: 1969: 2).

But both the patrilineal and matrilineal are concerned with lineage and the keeping of the family bond which has been affected by modernity. But point that should be maintained is that the function of the mother and the father, together with the elderly and adults of the extended family is to protect the lineage. However that protection of the lineage is fundamentally linked to the education of the children as the heir of the lineage. Baloyi argues: "Marriage is also viewed as the vehicle through which the continuity of the family or clan can be carried over to the next generation, hence the birth of the male children is also regarded as very important than that of a female in the family" (Baloyi: N/D: 1). The children born out of that union either from a; patrilineal and matrilineal, are not necessarily their possession. But rather that they are fruits of the society. Baloyi rightly asserts:

"One African proverb which says "It takes a village to raise a child" is equivalent to the Shangaan idiom "*N'wana ahi wa un'we*", literally meaning "a child does not belong only to his or her biological parents." The implication is that once a child is born, he or she must belong to a family, clan or community. Since African people never left anything related to family to an individual, children were also believed to belong to the community; hence every elderly person in the community was responsible to ensure that the children in that community are raised in the respect of the community values" (Baloyi: 4).

As such there is a fundamental lesson learnt from that family structure which is unity, but that does limit other forms of education for the children. Baloyi argues: "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. This statement helps us to understand that African people do not live in isolation. Living together in an African

context does not exclude the issue of marriage; hence an African woman is not only married to her husband, but to the entire family and clan" Baloyi: 2013: 9).

Education of an African child is not done in exclusivity as that of the Western World. In Africa a child is born in a family with many adults' i.e. elder brothers, sister, aunts and uncles, all which are responsible for care and discipline. Also the common playing of the children in associated with being a learning curve, coupled with minor chores, such as helping the elders. That encourages respect for elders and caring for them at a tender age. Mair notes the following: "A child grows up in a household where there are a number of adults and many older children. When he is small any of the women may take temporary charge of him, and as he gets older any of the adults may admonish him. He learns a great deal, including respect for seniority, from play with other children. Most necessary skills are acquired by watching elders and beginning to help them at a very early age" (Mair: 1969: 2).

Another point that should be made here is that the education of the African child within the family structure goes hand in hand with his/her development. By development what is meant is the biological and physical development that moves one from infancy to adolescence and to puberty. The modern day presents these stages from just the simplistic version of the criterion of human development. However Africa saw these developmental stages as linked to the growing and socialization of the child in the community and world, often having them accompanied by rites and customs, depending on the gender of the child.

> "Formal instruction is given at the puberty rites characteristics of so many tribes, which are regarded as a preparation and a necessary preliminary for life as an adult member of society. as these tribes lay much emphasis on sex and marital duties, and as older Africans in many places believe that their decay is one of the causes of the instability of modern marriage, the type of instruction given will be described in all cases where adequate accounts are available" (Mair: 1969: 2).

The question of puberty is linked to sex; sex in the marriage and out of marriage. Contrary to western "Christian" thinking sex in Africa is not sole sanctity but at times depending on the tribes can be followed by the right of purification, applicable even in marital infidelity. Sometime when the couple have been married for a few years there

is a rite done so as to never dissolve the marriage but as confirmatory. At times there is ritual sex for people who are not married but done simply out of cultural necessity. Mair notes: "The key to the attitude of Africans towards this subject is that the religious values associated with sex are concentrated on procreation and not on sexual activity as such" (Mair: 1969: 3). Further she adds:

> "Sexual abstinence is not regarded as a virtue in itself, and among those tribes where the marriage rules make it difficult for a man to marry early, there are often systems of permitted access to married women. Conception must be socially authorized. In some societies conception before the puberty ceremony, which, it must be remembered, is surrounded with religious rites and beliefs, is regarded with severer disapproval than conception before marriage, but in these societies marriage is expected to follow very closely on the puberty ceremony" (Mair: 1969: 3).

But one thing that should be considered is that sex to African is attached to procreation. Infidelity is not rare among African cultures, but it is believed in the Africa context that infidelity comes with supernatural punishment, reflecting the deep sanctity of African marriages. Another point which is fundamental in the concept of African marriage is the selection of the marriage partner. This is fundamental, in that firstly it establishes the suitability of a partner. While at the same time it is a safe guard against marrying one relative.

Since the elders from both families that seek to be married is sanctioned and receives blessings from the elders, the elders are then also involved in the selection of a partner though personal choice is allowed. Mair states the following:

> "Every marriage arranged by the elders is not necessarily forced upon an unwilling couple; nor, on the other hand, does the formal expression of consent which a bride is often required to give necessarily reflect her genuine opinion. In practice the relative effectiveness of parental pressure and filial determination varies from case to case as well as between different societies. Moreover, among many people which theoretically believe that the elders should arrange young people's marriage, there are recognized means by which the latter can assert their own choice" (Mair: 1969: 5).

3.5. Marriage contracts

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In having understood the nature of African marriages one cannot, not discuss what has been the main feature and character of African marriages—often attacked by the west-- which is the lobola and exchanging of gifts by the seniors on behalf of the man and family. Shope argued:

> "In the past, *lobolo* forged a relational bond among families, and, as the older women in the community recall, it celebrated the addition of the woman into the husband's family. Most rural women perceive *lobolo* as 'very good for them because it creates a great friendship. It is a way of making a relationship between two families'. Through the negotiation of *lobolo,* families are brought together and united; the transfer of *lobolo* creates a web of affiliations that stretches across generations and urban/rural locales" (Shope: 2011: 65-66).

Baloyi is right in noting: "For many Africans, the "vat-en-sit" marriage, in which couples simply live together without marital commitments or lobola agreed upon, has long been problematic" (Baloyi: N/D: 3). The concept of lobola does not mean sale, Nsereko asserts: "Viewed from the standpoints of the social function of marriage gifts, African traditional theology, and the nature of the family, it will be discovered that the Western notion of "purchase" was and still is absent from the true customary African marriages" (Nsereko: 1975: 684). Mair similarly notes:

> "The term 'bride-price', which was formerly used for the *quid pro quo*, has been rejected by many anthropologists because of its suggestion of a sale. But the phrase which describes it in many African languages can be literally translated 'marriage payment' or 'even 'marriage money', and the word 'marriage payment' will be used in this study. A payment is not necessarily a price, and can be made in many transactions which are not commercial. The system where the payment is made in cattle is the best known and perhaps also the most widespread, being found among all peoples in whose traditional economy cattle play an important part" (Mair: 1969: 5).

It is then important to understand the concept of lobola within, firstly the African context and how it relates to the families that are united, physically and ontologically, in a sense of the union between two families later affirmed by the birth of the child to the union. The second point that should be made is that lobola sets the social and economy of the family, as it relates to the man—in patriarchal societies- with the taking care of his wife and children, also as a point of signalling himself as a

contributing member of the community. In that communities are built by families and the continual caring of one's family.

Lobola is then best understood as an African symbol of commitment that supersedes the symbols of modernity with regards to rings and other instruments used to signal commitment. In a sense lobola becomes a more pragmatic approach to marriage, beyond the western European romanticism. That allows marriage between two people. Another point to be added is that it is through lobola that even organic African economies are established. But at the extreme is that usually lobola expresses the desire and potential of being a contributing member of society.

In line with the discussion of lobola there is also another aspect to it which is the exchange of goods. The exchange of goods is an intrinsic part of creating this extended family which is formed by marriage. Part of the exchange of goods is usually tied with the view of the permanency of marriage and to whom the gifts are rendered to. Nsereko asserts: "The gifts are normally delivered to the bride's father or guardian, who remains primarily responsible for their return should the intended marriage fail to materialize or, in some societies, to endure. Among many matrilineal societies, e.g. the Bokongo, Yombe, Puni, Kunyi, Kamba, Sundi and Mbata of the Lower and Middle Congo, this role is played by the bride's maternal uncle or the head of the matri-lineage" (Nsereko: 1975: 685).

Further he adds:

> "The determination of the quantum of the gifts also varies from society to society. it may be fixed by custom, by "bargaining" and agreement, by legislation or, as among the Tswana of South Africa, the question may be left to the absolute discretion of the bridegroom, though in such a case the girl's family may protest the insufficiency of the *bogadi* if they consider the man's family wealth enough to afford more. But they do not have a right to reject the amount given and demand more" (Nsereko: 1975: 686).

But another point to be made in line with the exchange of goods is that the exchange of goods is all depended on African family diversities. As well as a cultural pattern of particular ethnic groups/tribes—noting there are many African cultures-- as such these factors then reflect and serve as a determinant/conditionality on and of the type of gifts that are to be exchanged. Nsereko is right in noting that: "... the gifts take different

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forms according to each society. They may be made in the form of livestock in the pastoral societies or agricultural products and farming implements in agricultural societies. In many societies today, marriage gifts are made in the form of cash" (Nsereko: 1975: 685). It is then clear even from such knowledge how then African marriages played an important point in African societal economies. Thus even allowing for society to society and their various approaches to life envisaged in their cultural pattern, either as; pastoral, agricultural etc. to exchange gifts that might not be available to another culture. An important factor that is being neglected with the confines and definition of marriage today and the exchange of gifts through money, which is an everyday commodity, particular in a materialist era.

Maquet capture the significance of exchange of gifts, reflecting on the Hamba tribe he rightly asserts:"... marriage by compensation, which is the most common form among the forest famers. The bridegroom gives certain goods to the person who represents the lineage of his bride. Among the Hamba, this is a certain number of goats or sheep, between six and sixteen; among the Mongo, metal goods of iron, copper or bass; among the Kissi, skeins of spun cotton. These were sometimes considered as the purchase price of a woman" (Maquet: 1972: 80). It is also important to note that marriage gifts can either be used as lobola or simply used as gifts of the acknowledgement and establishing of family or tribal alliances. Thus both marriage gifts and lobola are used within the African culture--though depended on tribe—interchangeable. Another factor that serves as validity to the natural economics of the African way of life and marriage is provided by one specific practice of using the goods gains from the release of the bride from her family. Then those goods used to the pay out for her brother's bride. A signal of the communal benefits that African marriages play in the well fair of both families and thus the whole community as well as an indication of the value of extended families. Maquet notes:

> "In traditional culture of forest clearings, the meaning of these marriage gifts is clear: the lineage requesting a woman, instead of giving in exchange another woman, offers goods which enable the lineage which bestows the woman to obtain another woman in its turn. Thus the problem of simultaneous parallel marriage is avoided, and the circulation of marriage partners is much broader, since it is no longer limited to two lineages only. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that among certain groups

the goods obtained from the marriage of a daughter may be used only to obtain a wife for one of the men of the lineage" (Maquet: 1972: 80).

At the same time there is another alternative route used as payment which is that of labour which is used instead of goods. This practice has various reasons why one would use their labour as payment. Which quite often includes socio-economic factors of a particular individual who is to marry; this is common practice in the ancient world. Nsereko affirms the form of payment known as physical labour: "Interestingly, this custom also existed in some non-African cultures. The bible tells us how Jacob, Abraham's grandson, had to labor for seven years before he could be given Rachel's hand in marriage" (Nsereko: 1975: 686).

There is a fundamental lesson that is to be learnt from this practice, in the biblical texts Jacob is said to have got some cattle coupled with getting Rachel's hand in marriage. This then reflects that as this practice is practiced in given cultures and context the man would have had a relationship with his father in-law. While at the same time it would signify for the father that indeed the person whose daughter's hand is given to marriage too is trustworthy with the father's possession—as he labours for him--and thus would be trusted with the providing of the family and with the father's daughter. In a sense this practice carries with it a point for the man to prove himself to the father, more like preliminary evaluation on the choice of the man.

3.6.   Romanticism of love and the African marriage built on love

Among the many tenets of African marriage is that marriage can be pre-arranged between families, unlike the modern day romanticized version of marriage. Smith notes within the Nigerian the following:

"Igbos are generally patrilineal and marriage is lineage exogamous. Traditionally, marriages created alliances across nearby communities and were mostly arranged by families. Among those over 60 years old, stories of mate selection typically include a memory of the time when one's father or mother pointed out a young woman or man and said, "That will be your spouse." Even in the days when arranged marriages were taken for granted, this was a frightening and awesome moment. Almost all old people,

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whether male or female, could narrate in great detail the moment they found out about their betrothal. Elder Igbo say that both men and women have always had the right to refuse marriage partners, but social pressure to meet community and family expectations made that difficult. Memories of girls who ran away to avoid a particular marriage, or men who defied their parents and married the women of their choice, demonstrate that a tension between arranged marriage and personal preferences has long existed. Popular fables and myths often recount men and women who acted out of love and defied family and community demands. In some stories the protagonists end up as heroes or heroines; in many others their defiance serves to explain their ill fate" (Smith: 2001: 134).

The modern day idealism of marriage has love as a central theme between the union of man and woman. African marriages have always assumed a position of the permanency of marriage, thus the deep need of commitment through dowry. But more fundamentally so through the unity of the families, however love is not absent in the African mode and understanding of marriage. Smith asserts:

"The emergence of romantic love as a criterion in mate selection and the increasing importance of conjugality (i.e. a couple's personal relationship to each other) in marriage relationships do not mean that romantic love itself has only recently emerged in Africa. When I asked elderly Igbos about their betrothals, their marriage, and about love, they related personal stories and popular fables that indicated a long tradition of romantic love. Many men and women confessed that they would have married a person other than their spouse had they been allowed to "follow the heart." Scholars have documented the existence of romantic love in Africa long before it became a widely accepted criterion for marriage" (Smith: 2001: 130).

It is not that social standing of marriage, which is typical of African marriage that has communities (elders) as deeply involved supersedes love as a vital part of marriage in Africa and African marriages. But rather that the construct of marriage built on love is limited. In that many marriages that have been built in the modern era, out of the concept of marriage for love have the high of divorce, lack of accountability, people can just let go whenever they please. And that is not the value system of African and their out look to marriage but rather it is understood that marriage is organic and evolves.

That growth and evolving includes both the couple having to learn about each other, with the help of the elders should problems arise. Something which is limited today and the role of elders are simply replaced by the western mode of pre-marital counselling, education demographics and new ideas. Smith notes: "A powerful confluence of social and demographic changes in sub-Saharan Africa has contributed to changing the dynamics of courtship and marriage. Increasing education, urban migration and employment, the influence of widely circulating ideas about love and romance, and the related rise in the age of marriage have created a process of courtship that privileges individual choice and interpersonal emotions" (Smith: 2001: 147).

Another point worthy to be mentioned is that love can develop between two individuals if they are willing to give it a try. One has to mention this as a way to show that African culture has always had the ability to allow possibility. While at the same time it reflects human strength and adaptability, which shows there cannot always be one way to do things. In direct contrast to the modern way of doing things that always have preconceived ideas and always wants to appeal to individualistic ideals, such as love. Consider also another important point is that these marriages built on love leave broken homes, confuses children with parents having to leave here while the other lives in another place.

The major critique of marriage built on love is that it seems all have various meanings and understandings of love, but mainly the concept of love seems to be understood from the west's meaning of love. While that is understandable, considering the dominance of the west on all areas of black people's lives, what is baffling is that this love is usually individualistic and implies one seeks their way or the high way (one might note as a result of the western approach to life, love and human beings as every part of the west it is bound to be individualistic, considering the west and its promotion of individualism usually hidden in personal choice).

While it also contains the view that one can love today and tomorrow change, thus usually the lack of permanency in such marriages, possibly the only way to have a proper marriage today, is to have an accommodative pattern, meaning and understanding of marriage centred on both love and culture, Smith rightly records: "Africans are not simply abandoning traditional practices in favour of modern ones, but

are creating their own systems of marriage and family organization that use resources of the past and the present, negotiating the tensions that emerge, and drawing on both traditional and modern moralities as they see fit. Process of social reproduction and social transformation are mutually implicated, such that modern African marriages are both new and embedded in longstanding social and cultural systems" (Smith: 2001: 132).

3.6.1. Colonial Christianity and Love

Among other factors that have affected African marriages, their structures, conditionality, relevance and their meaning, is the conversion of Africans to Christianity. A point has to be made that it is a conversion to "colonial Christianity" as opposed to Christianity. Hasting in discussing on the colonial Christianity project pointed out the loss that came with conversion, he asserted that colonialism and colonial Christianity affected very much of the African culture in all aspects, be it political or cultural, and that even in the institution of marriage it cut through in its infiltration and penetration of the African life. But the more fundamental caution Hastings points out is that: "It may take generations for a replacement of comparable credibility to be found for what was lost with conversion" (Hastings: 1979: 18).

The conversion of the African to colonial Christianity meant a change of cultural values and belief system to 'Christian values' as taught by the missionaries. The missionary evangelism preached the version of the love of God that meant that if the African is to accept the love of God he/she would detach from cultural values that have pre-existed before the arrival of Christianity, as bought by the missionaries. This change of beliefs then meant a different starting point, while colonial Christianity proposed and preached freedom in Christ from the so-called 'burdens of cultures and traditions'. It immediately at the set time made European ideas and ideals burdens upon the Africans. The centrality of African marriage was superseded by "Christian' centrality of love, Christian marriage ceremony versus the African ceremony and the sanctity of marriage. It is important to assert that these constructs of love and sanctity as being informed by Europe meant the African marriage was not sanctified, nor built on love.

These points show the denial and distortion of the concept and meaning of God in Africa, even in the field of everyday life and African marriage ceremony. The Christian belief in love and God has benefits for any marriage though has somehow problematic areas particularly in areas of communal bonds and the reinforcement of individualism found in conjugal relationships. Smith notes: "The message of the Christian ceremony is that the success of the marriage depends above all on the individual couple and on their relationships with each other and with God. Families are, of course, asked to assist in supporting the marriage, but the ceremony very much reinforces a conjugal, companionate model of marriage, with the couple as partners in a particularly individual kind of project" (Smith: 2001: 139).

But a point that should be made is that the Christian message is a western approach to marriage. It denies the importance of African authenticity, seen in the African customs and traditions of marriage. While it introduces the materialist element in marriage, what is understood as the Christian marriage in a sense is harbours; materialism and individualism, Smith notes:

> "People clearly distinguish between what they call the traditional wedding and the modern "white" or Christian wedding. The difference in the ceremonies, and the talk about the ceremonies, index different conceptions of what marriage is, what gender roles should be, and what it means to be a family. Most Igbos aspire to have both traditional and Christian wedding ceremonies. But the traditional ceremony is essential and obligatory; the Christian ceremony is more of a luxury and a symbol of wealth and progressiveness. No one dares neglect or evade the traditional ceremony. Not to perform it means—in the eyes of relatives, affines, and the wider community—that the couple is not married" (Smith2001: 138).

It is interesting to observe that Smith notes that even with the opulence displayed in the 'Christian wedding ceremony', traditions still takes primacy. This primacy is being undermined by; modernity, but furthered undermining is by the African themselves. As they often look forward to the meaning of marriage as wedding than the African marriage. Smith points out the fundamental differences of roles in the traditional wedding ceremony and Christian wedding ceremony: "The traditional wedding ceremony establishes an enduring social alliance (albeit one potentially fraught with antagonisms), and a lifelong series of exchanges (again spoken about as rights and

obligations) between the extended families of the husband and the wife. At the center of that alliance is a mutual interest in the children produced in the marriage" (Smith: 2001: 138). This approach requires elders to pray and protect the marriage and asks God to bless the marriage with offspring's. While:

> "The Christian ceremony, in contrast, is officiated in a church, often in town, by a single minister or priest who serves to sanctify the marriage in the eyes of God. Following a Western model, the bride dresses in a white wedding gown and the groom in a tuxedo or dark suit. Bridesmaids (who are often urban or school friends, as well as relatives) dress in matching outfits, and the groom is assisted by his best man and perhaps some ushers. The ceremony is followed by a reception at which there are formal toasts, a very ceremonial cutting of a wedding cake, and of course much eating, drinking, and dancing" (Smith: 2001: 139).

One can note that African outlook towards marriage and the emphasis placed on fertility reflects the practicality of African marriages. Particularly in the modern era as even the couples married out of the metaphysical realities of love face problems when there is no child in the marriage, when the marriage euphoria of 'marriage out of love' dies down and reality has to be faced out of that blear. It is important to note also that another aspect affected is by this concept of love and the Christian marriage is that the church seemed to separate itself from the general practice of marriage. Instead of what solely God has join together must connect with what God and the community join together let no man put asunder. This way of marriage will assure authenticity of the marriage in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the community. Thus also safe guarding the community from destroying the marriage either through adultery with the neighbour or family member, if this could be applied with the new African and Christian marriage in our context.

3.7.   Modernity and the African marriage

In the modern era, that is characterised by a; consumerist culture, historical distorts, cultural domination and bastardisation of cultures, the heritage of colonialism, imperialism, racism and at the present; materialism and the prevailing views of individualism, free choice, democracies, agnosticism and extreme solipsism. It is not impossible to understand that even the institution of African marriages is viewed from

such lenses. As such there are already perceived understandings concerning marriage and African marriage, which I shall explain as I go along.

3.7.1. Historical distorts

African marriages have been distorted as many other aspects of African/Black life. If marriage then forms part of the human identity, as an institution that exclusively is expected, found and practiced by human beings. Then African marriages distortions come primarily as an identity crisis, emanating from dehumanisation. It is important to mention that Africaness has no place in whiteness and western values, more since modernity as a western construct has produced social changes for the world and Africans. Meekers rightly notes: "..., increasing exposure to Western norms is a potential source of social change, and there are indications that some changes in marital behaviour are indeed taking place..."(Meekers: 1992: 62).

The social changes are an act of social history, a social history of black people being forcefully socialized with historical baggages, identity crisis and self-doubt into an inhumane world. The historical lies, fabrication and distortions give validity of these social changes being dehumanizing to blacks and are geared towards western values. The distortion of African history, culture, values, religion, communities and African marriages need to be delineated for African to find truth of their identity and customs. Bohannan and Curtin rightly argue: "For Europeans and North Americans, Africa has been seen for centuries through a web of myth so pervasive and so glib that understanding has to come through two stages. First, the myth itself has to be studied so that it can be stripped away to expose the reality hidden behind it. In the sense of the old aphorism, "It's not what we don't know that is dangerous; it's what we do know that's not true." Only then can we undertake the second state: seeing what is in fact there" (Bohannan and Curtin: 1988: 3).

The black world has been veiled with doubt, myths and inferiority complex from the history inscribed by colonialism. Blacks who were often understood as subhuman, both political and religious, were seen as incapable of knowing or understanding

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anything, let alone the institution of marriage. Biko reflects this linkage of religion and politics,

> 'Because the white missionary described black people as thieves, lazy, sex-hungry etc. and because he equated all that was valuable with whiteness, our Churches through our ministers see all these vices I have mentioned above not as manifestations of the cruelty and injustice which we are subjected to by the white man but inevitable proof that after all the white man was right when he described us as savages. Thus if Christianity in its introduction was corrupted by the inclusion aspect which made it the ideal religion for the colonisation of people, nowadays in its interpretation it is the ideal religion for the maintenance of the subjugation of the same people" (Biko: 1978:61).

African marriages were reduced to [3]chauvinism, barbarism and immoral, particularly considering the colonial Christian mind and the lack of understanding the reasons for African polygamy. Mugambi states: "The modern Christian missionary enterprise, originating in modern "Christian" Europe, was directed at "pagan Africa and at those areas where European influence had not yet penetrated" (Mugambi: 1989: 8). This then explains the understanding of the paganising of Africans and their institution and culture. Hastings states concerning effects of colonial Christianity and its penetration into culture and tribe: "It bit into the cultural context of political institution just as it did into marital institution. It may take generations for a replacement of comparable credibility to be found for what was lost with conversion" (Hastings: 1979: 18). Conversion thus coasted a lot of African culture and its institution of marriage, but to be clear rather than generalizing.

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[3] Black cultures historically were perceived as chauvinistic, oppressive to women and patriarchal. This is true particularly since this history has been written by Europeans, though it is important to point out that black manhood before any point can be made concerning patriarchy and chauvinism, has been overshadowed by European patriarchy, which has been problematic in Europe, considering how they treated their own women. Wamue and Theuri note: *"The* early missionaries were all products of patriarchal societies. In their societies, the roles of women and men were clearly defined along gender lines. This was their greatest goal." (Wamue and Theuri: 2003: 156). Further: "Even if a woman was professional in some field (although this was rare), she had to stop practicing her profession soon after marriage in order to take up her domestic roles in the home" (Wamue and Theuri: 2003: 156). So before a charge is charged at the black/African man

It is the conversion to colonial Christianity that affected the African Value System and African culture. And not particularly 'orthodox' Christianity one would believe that Christianity in its 'original' form would have acknowledged African value systems and way of life rather than condemn it, Pheko is right in stating the following concerning the Gospel and Christianity: "What has the Gospel done for Africa? This is a subject that can arouse deep emotions in the hearts of some people in Africa. From the very onset, therefore, I must state very categorically that I am not about to defend colonialism or the role misguided missionaries from West played in Africa" (Pheko: 1982: 75). While further stating the point of departure from colonial Christianity and Christianity: "I, however, distinguish between colonial "Christianity" and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When obeyed, the Gospel has never failed to bring blessings to an individual, family, community or nation" (Pheko: 1982: 75). This can clearly be echoed by Christ in Mathew 5 in stating I have not come to destroy the law and the prophets but fulfil.

It is important also to mention that the western approach to life and the world is problematic for blacks. Particularly since modernity and its economies have been fundamental in breaking the African family structure that is built on marriages. And further re-affirms the distortion of African marriages, as more black families are split. A result is the splitting of African brotherhood and the extended family, which latter manifest itself in individualism. Foster asserts:

> "In recent years, changes such as labour migration, the cash economy, demographic change, formal education and westernization have occurred which have weakened extended families. Labour migration and urbanization have led to a reduction in the frequency of contact with relatives and encouraged social and economic dependence; possessions are perceived as personal property and no longer belong to the extended family. Increased life expectancy and family size mean it is now impossible for an extended family of three or four generations to reside together; the diminishing availability of land makes it difficult for large families to be economically independent through subsistence agriculture. Education about social values occur through schools and interactions of children with their peers rather than through traditional mechanisms, which has lessened the ability of older people to exert social change over children" (Foster: 2010: 56-57).

When considering Foster's analysis one can clearly see that among the main source of African marriages is the platonic understanding of marriage. That which is popularised by the west of a marriage between two people who are in love. This point shows the contrast between a marriage of individuals in a community and a marriage of individuals within the community. Thus implying the role a community place in marriage. The African marriage falls to the latter, of a marriage within the community. With this point one can dare suggest it is fundamental for African particularly as it concerns the extended family, which today could serve a role in a society inflicted by orphans. Forster points out following in the marriage of individuals within the community and the communal bonds established by the two individuals in their marriage:

> "In practice, considerable flexibility exists in many marriage systems; a man may agree to the marriage of his daughter based on the promise of payment of the brideprice; if the husband dies before making these payments, his lineage will have no claim to the children of the marriage and, conversely, no responsibility to care for paternal orphans. The extended family was the traditional social security and its members were responsible for the protection of the vulnerable, care for the poor and sick and the transmission of traditional social values and education. Families, particularly in traditional societies, involve a large network of connections among people extending through varying degrees of relationship including multiple generations, over a wide geographic area and involving reciprocal obligations" (Foster: 2010: 56).

Another point that is worthy to be mentioned, which has become a center of post-Apartheid and post-Democratic (90s) South African politics, is that of land. The reason to mention the issue of land within the scope of African marriage is that land means two things to Africans; identity and economics and habitation. In that it is from the land that Africans, particularly man would provide for their families and thus protecting to common bond of the family. Though woman, themselves, play a major role in the land, but what is interesting with the land is that it goes hand and hand with gender roles and the education of the African child.

3.8. Cultural domination and bastardisation of cultures

Biko asserted: "One of the most difficult things to do these days is to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture. Somehow Africans are not expected to have

any deep understanding of their own culture or even themselves. Other people have become authorities on all aspects of life or to be more accurate on BANTU life" (Biko: 1978: 44). In the light of history and its occurrences Biko can be heard loud and clear by conscious minds that see the effects of western epistemologies and methodologies that inform modernity. To a large degree one can assert that indeed modernity has been able to impose its values, outlooks and practices in the lives of Africans and Africa.

It would not be unfounded to state that the culture that exists in Africa is trapped in the maze of white distortions, if not having to constantly to rely for approval from the white world. Biko argues: "... the black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation, he rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning white to all that is good, in other words he associates good and he equates good with white. This arises out of his development from childhood" (Biko: 1978: 111). Meekers notes: "In sub-Saharan Africa the ideal of the conjugal family had been promoted by changes in family law imposed by the colonial administration and by exposure to Western values through missionary education. According to Goode (1963), these factors had already initiated modest changes in African family systems in the direction of the Western conjugal family, and there was no doubt that further changes in the same direction would continue" (Meekers: 1992: 62).

The western world has been chief in the domination and near obliteration of African cultures. This observation is validated by Nicolaides, who argues: "American norms, values and practices are being conveyed across the Atlantic as the suitable mode of behaviour for Africans. As a consequence of this cultural migration, Africa's rich culture is being degraded and is viewed as inferior by many Africans" (Nicolaides: 2012: 118). Further Nicolaides argues: "Americanization and Globalisation have resulted in the extinction of about 22,000 indigenous culture in the last decade and approximately 90% of the worlds languages will disappear in the next century" (Nicolaides: 2012: 126).

The greatest achievement for the cultural domination and bastardisation of Africa's culture is not necessarily restricted to the distortions and condescending attitudes of the west towards blacks. But rather the fuel to guarantee the existence and permanence of these lies and distortions is entangled with the mindset of Africans in

the sea of modernity. Biko was right in noting that "the potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed". Biko rightly argued: "The advent of the Western Culture has changed our outlook almost drastically. No more could we run our own affairs.......Whenever colonisation sets in with its dominant culture it devours the native culture and leaves behind a bastardised culture that can only thrive at the rate and pace allowed it by the dominant culture. This is what has happened to the African culture. It is a sub-culture purely because the African people in the urban complexes are mimicking the white man rather unashamedly" (Biko: 1978: 5).

It is then clear to note that the permeating pervasiveness of Western values and civilization accelerates due to the adoption of their views and outlooks by blacks as a matter of survival. By this what is implied is that the western outlook is the only way that is feasible to living in and through, there cannot be any ultimatums. Thus an African outlook based on community, identity, family, spirituality and the centrality of human being is replaced by modern ways of living. Biko (1978: 51) asserts: "In rejecting Western values, therefore, we are rejecting those things that are not only foreign to us but that seek to destroy the most cherished of our beliefs—that the corner-stone of society is man himself—not just his welfare, not his material wellbeing but just man himself will all his ramifications. We reject the power based society of the Westerner that seeks to be ever concerned with perfecting their technological know-how while losing out on their spiritual dimension".

3.9.   Conclusion

As a build up to a conclusion one could rightly say that African marriage is not distinct to the biblical narratives of marriage. God (or the supernatural and ancestors) is very much influential and involve in the institution of marriage. Unity between man and woman, together with society is vital for the communal life God intended for humanity in the Genesis accounts of creation of both; man and woman. Furthermore it lays ground for the role and place for their children. Appreciation of man for his woman through lobolo would be able give insight today for many to be care givers to their wives and children. A careful viewing of African marriages can show how Christianity tallies well with African marriages. It can also show the compatibility of African religions and culture with that of the people of biblical times.

While at the same time one is to note that colonial Christianity and the entire colonialist project outlawed the value of African marriages. Firstly, among themselves, as the so called luminaries of the Dark Continent and its people through colonialism and its so-called civilization of blacks. Secondly, the legitimacy of African people as people/human beings also reflects how it is questioned in marriage and how it has in turn it has carried down traditional and historically dating to the present the lack of optimism on the part of Africans to authenticating themselves and findinding value in their way of doing things. The African marriage systems as a way of life must be revisited in the present context. Particularly now since there is a need to reconsider the value that African marriages can add to the world, but quite fundamentally so in the African family structure that has been tempered with and nearly destroyed through colonialism, industrialism and urbanisation.

It is time for the Africa and the Africans to awake from the deep sleep caused upon them by the veneration of western values and ideals. Which have proven in the modern era to be problematic for them as well as the survival of their families and marriages which are dependent on marriages. Further in the present era with all that has come to be known about Africans and Africa must be delineated from the generalization of European history, which is often distorted for a particular purpose. That is to sing praises to Europe and their way of life. Africa and the Africans must revisit the lessons found; lobola, mushibodiso and the marriage to the extended family.

African marriages under the new dispensation must be given their historical significance in the lives and make up of people and communities. This includes that even the laws and powers that be need not to argue about African marriages around the framework given to them by the dominance of the world by the west. But rather a self-imposed African framework that is to deal with African issues ranging from; economies (implied in marriage custom), cultures, histories, education and religion.

Chapter Four

African Marriages and "Christianization"

4.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters we have discussed two issues; viz, the historicity of Reformed church polity in South Africa as well as the question of Africanization, focusing especially on the subject of African Marriages. I have explored the significance of the subject of African marriages for a context in which many calls are made for the Africanization of the church. For the Christian of African descent, it is significant to declare the existence of a perpetual internal struggle. Tshaka (2014) is therefore correct to make the point of double consciousness with respect to the Christian of African descent. It is therefore not palpable to accede that this Christian is ever able to escape his or her being African, a challenge which always comes to the fore when this Christian is faced by adversity.

The Christian faith which, I must admit, has become part of the being of the Christian of African descent, must be seen as imposed, whichever way we look at it. It is for this reason that the objective of teaching this faith becomes central in the reformed church tradition. The church order is quick to point to her confessions which essentially encapsulate what is believed by this church. All these attempts at inculcating this faith into the being of the Christian of African descent are not by chance, but are in fact intentionally done to maintain that cultural hegemony over African cultures and belief systems. At the same time, what these attempts are successful in is that they dismiss any alternative way of being. It is for this reason I believe, that the church orders find it necessary to define what is understood as normative marriage, for instance. Yet we will also see that the Church order of the URCSA which in essence is to be viewed as the guideline in terms of Christian conduct, it but simply an aspect in the endeavour of cementing Christian ways of life as the ultimate normative life.

In this chapter, I will deal more specifically with the inadequate response of the church order of the URCSA on the question of African marriages. This is done briefly because

of the lack of material on this subject. It will also become clear that the URCSA cannot really boast that it has embraced Africanity. I say this because the very Belhar Confession, which is perceived to be the hallmark of the URCSA, does not embrace Africanity even though issues of unity, reconciliation and justice are lifted up in the confession.   It is a well-known fact that the URCSA originated as a result of the merger of a section of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa as well as the Dutch reformed Mission Church.

That the church orders, albeit it briefly, advocates for the Christian marriage as the norm is not haphazard but intentional. I say this is intentional in that this Christian tradition by so doing perpetuates her dominance over Africanity. For the purposes of this chapter, we shall consider the Church Orders of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, *streeksinodes van Noord-en Suid-Transvaal*, 1968 and 1988. I shall therefore also consider the church order of the general Synod of the URCSA 1994 as well as the regional synod of 1998. It will immediately become apparent that our conversation must be located not in the church order per se but in Christianity in general. I will nonetheless refer to those instances where the URCSA deals with the question of marriage in a manner that looks down on African marriages. This, I assert is located in the heart of the Christian tradition as transposed to Africa. Once I have briefly alluded to the regional church order of the URCSA, I will continue my conversation by pointing to instances in the evolution of humanity which does seem to be conversant with African world views and belief systems.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold; first it attempts to show the disregard that the church Order has for African views. This is done by pointing to the issue of Marriage and how an African view of marriage is summarily dismissed. The second part attempts to speak to the wider Christian project which must assert itself at the expense of African understandings of marriage for instance. That we speak of marriage is simply because this is the only matter that is touched on by the church order and at the same time reflects the disdain that the Christianization project has for alternatives views of being.

4.2. **The stance of the regional synods of the DRCA on the question of Marriage**

I have argued elsewhere that the URCSA is an amalgamation of the DRCA as well as the DRMC. It is therefore significant that we consult the church order of the DRCA since this has been incorporated into the new church system. The URCSA only became official in 1994. It is therefore to be expected that all historical data that predate the establishment of the URCSA must be traced to the DRCA. The regional synods of the DRCA recognize only Christian marriages. I shall refer to it briefly as contained in (kerkorder en aanvullende Bepalinge 1968:96). Herein, the Christian marriage is defined in three points as follows;

'(i) dit is 'n huwelik tussen twee persone wat die koningskap van christus in hulle persoonlike lewens erken en ook verlang dat hulle huwelikslewe onder sy konninskap sal staan.

(ii) Hulle begeer dat hulle huwelik sal wees in ooreenstemming met dit wat God daaromtrent bepaal het soos vervat in sy Woord.

(iii) Hulle soek sy goddeike genade, hulp en seen in en oor hulle huwelik en verlang dat die huwelik in die Naam van Christus in die boesem van Sy gemeente voltrek sal word waar daar deur die gemeente en hulle gesamentlik gebid kan word dat christus seened in hulle huwelislewe teenwoodig sal wees en hulle in staat sal stel om as egliede te lewe in ooreensteming met die wat God die Vader daaromtrent gewil het.'

The order then touches on divorce and declares as follows;

(i) Dat die huwelik in sy wese onontbindbaar is (matt. 19:6)

(ii) Dat owerspel 'n sondige verbreking van die huwelik is (egbreuk) op grond waarvan die onskuldige ook die verbreking van die huweliksband mag aanvaar (Matt. 19:90).

(iii) Dat wanner 'n ongelowige in 'n huwelikverbintenis met 'n gelowige om geloofsredes wil skei, die gelowige vry is om die ongelowige te laat skei (1Kor. 7:15).

(iv) Die sinode besluit dat wanner om ongeoorloofde redes geskei word, hertrou in stryd is met die skrif (1Kor 7:10, 11).

Then the church order goes on proscribe to local church councils to ensure that married couples stay married for this is in the interest of the kingdom of God.

The third aspect in the discussion on Christian marriages touches upon the issue of Lobola which is translated as Bride price in some instances.

The following is declares. 'die sinode neem kennis van die geruik van lobola, maar bely dat die huwelik 'n instelling van God is en dat dit die roeping van die kerk is om slegs die eise sowel as die ryke beloftes van die evangelie met betrekking tot die huwelik te verkondig' (Kerkorde 1968:97).

Die kerk sal altyd 'n duidelike stem laat hoor en sy stryd sal verskerp teen die euwels wat met Lobola gepaard gaan soos bv.:

(i) buitensporige Lobola;

(ii) kommersialisering van die Lobola nl. Dat dit 'n koopprys is;

(iii) wanner dit veelwywery in die hand werk;

(iv) wanner dit inbreuk maar op die vrye keuse van die huwelikspaar;

(v) die leviraatshuwelik;

(vi) die sororaathuwelik, waar die vrou te sterwe kom kort na die huwelikn en een van haar ongetroude susters of naverwante familie haar plek by haar moet inneem of waar die vrou onvrugbaar is en haar suster of nabye familie lid by haar man inwoon om vir haar kinders te baar;

(vii) waar dit aan die man die reg gee om sy vrou aan ander mans uit te leen;

(viii) waar dit aan die vrou geen regte bied nie asook erfregte en beeskerming vir die vrou by die afsterwe van haar eie man'

(ix) waar dit die opvoeding en versorging van die kinders deur hul eie moeder by die afsterwe van hull evader verhinder

4.3. Christian Marriage versus African marriage?

The debate about African marriages versus "Christian marriages" with regards to western church polities is a complex debate. Particularly when compared to the impositions of what defines a Christian marriage under the popularized Christianity and its values from the west. Usually the Christian marriage is seen as the church marriage that is consecrated and approved by the church. It also means the entire ceremony of the marriage, such as the white dress and the opulence that comes with it.

> "People clearly distinguish between what they call the traditional wedding and the modern "white" or Christian wedding. The difference in the ceremonies, and the talk about the ceremonies, index different conceptions of what marriage is, what gender roles should be, and what it means to be a family. Most Igbos aspires to have both traditional and Christian wedding ceremonies. But the traditional ceremony is essential and obligatory; the Christian ceremony is more of a luxury and a symbol of wealth and progressiveness. No one dares neglect or evade the traditional ceremony. Not to perform it means—in the eyes of relatives, affine, and the wider community—that the couple is not married" (Smith2001: 138).

This goes to together with the emphasis on love and the unity of the couple that can exist outside the community, a direct contrast to African marriage which is based on the community. There is also the view that a Christian marriage is recognized by God and He is too blesses the union. Smith noted the variance in understanding and contrast of African marriage and "Christian" marriage, he asserted:

"The Christian ceremony, in contrast, is officiated in a church, often in town, by a single minister or priest who serves to sanctify the marriage in the eyes of God. Following a Western model, the bride dresses in a white wedding gown and the groom in a tuxedo or dark suit. Bridesmaids (who are often urban or school friends, as well as relatives) dress in matching outfits, and the groom is assisted by his best man and perhaps some ushers. The ceremony is followed by a reception at which there are formal toasts, a very ceremonial cutting of a wedding cake, and of course much eating, drinking, and dancing" (Smith: 2001: 139).

These factors I have mentioned above help to prove how the western world and the entire institutions of white colonial powers, ecclesiastical and state polities and the imperial project have undermined African cultures. Something that it still does even in the new context of post-colonialism, post-imperialism and post-apartheid South Africa. While at the same time there is emphasis on the western world and it churches to put westernization as a synonym of Christianity.

Thus there is a line that has to be established to properly delineate what is Christian between the confusion that is posed by Europeanization and Christianization. We need thus to properly define not "Christian marriages" but marriage itself. Marriage and culture that Africans can best define and describe/ascribe meaning for themselves. Since the western world has made herself master of all knowledge and can quickly dismiss our cultures with authority. Biko (1978: 44) is right in noting that: "One of the most difficult things to do these days is to talk with authority on anything to do with African culture. Somehow Africans are not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even themselves. Other people have become authorities on all aspects of life or to be more accurate on BANTU life".

While the impositions caused by western polity; politically and ecclesiastically, African's conversion to Christianity is still viewed from the basis that blacks are not human beings. As such their culture can easily be oversimplified and at the worst ignored by the western world, institutions, whites and Africans themselves based on their conversion Christianization and the civilization process. Nigel Gibson (2003: 31) argued: "Just as the eye is not simply a mirror but a "correcting mirror" racial gaze is not a human condition but a social construction that can be resolved by "correcting cultural errors".

The basis for such a correction is by "returning" to what Fanon considers the phenomenologically "real" the lived experience of the Black in a racist society". He further states on my view of the loss of Black humanity and identity: "Defined in the context of the White the Black has been stripped of identity and "abraded into nonbeing". What is finally at stake in the colonial situation is the replacement of the indigenous consciousness by "an authority symbol representing the master" who is charged with maintaining order and control" (Gibson: 2003: 33).

In the modern era the attitude of the western world and how it has profoundly influenced the mind of black depicts this control and order as noted by Gibson. A situation contrary to Black Communalism, Biko stated on Black Communalism: "It is evident that in such a philosophy everyman is your brother and cannot be used for private gain of another. On the contrary everyone and society itself is under obligation to ensure that every member shall be provided for. In this society there are no slaves and lords. It is a free society which gives man every opportunity to develop their talents and their means to the fullest but constrains them to exploit others" (Wits Archives-A2177: N/D: 1).

The unfortunate part of this history is rooted in Christianity. This Christianity is that which emerged from the west contemporaneously with white racism and the predominance of western ways of life as new modes of a global culture. A cultural bastardization, down playing other cultures. Kinget asserts: "Culture making, a social process pertinent to all human activities and products whose patterns are distinctive in a given society. Such patterns can be discerned in the endless variety of customs, institutions, laws, language, religion, politics, entertainment, rituals, cooking, dress, art and architecture prevailing with a society during a certain, often extensive history" (Kinget: 3). While Mackenzie states: "The Bantu adapted to their environments and formed distinctive ethnic groups and polities that emerged during the course of the second millennium including the Hereros and Tonga" (Mackenzie: 2005: 173).

Steve Biko correctly points out that humans are self-conscious and innovative, he states: "A culture is essentially the society's composite answer to the varied problem of life. We are experiencing new problems by the day and whatever we do adds to the richness of our cultural heritage as long as it has Man as its centre" (Unisa archives Accession 153: 1972: 25). The distortion of African marriages and polities is a political agenda as it qualifies also to be an ecclesiastical controversy. The controversy between politics and state in the falsification and distortion of African cultures comes from the missionaries and the travellers. Thus it is only logical to see that the denial of African marriages come from historically white churches and the white.

This informs the condescending attitudes of the western world. Steve Biko states: "Ours is true-man-centred society whose sacred tradition is that of sharing. We must reject as we have been doing, the individualistic cold approach to life that is the corner

stone of the Anglo Boer culture" (Unisa Archives Accession 153: 1972: 25). While Bohannan and Curtin assert: "Culture shock experienced by missionaries and other travellers was almost invariably reported in terms of the inferior qualities of the people who were being visited. Even the staunchest supporters of individual Africans said no more than that because some had become "civilized", all could become so. What we now know to have been the achievements of African culture were not recognized until well into this century" (Bohannan and Curtin: 1988: 57).

If what Bohannan and Curtin assert concerning the recognition of African culture only in the late centuries between the twentieth and 21th centuries. This can only provide two analysis of the situation, firstly it either the process that hinders the full recognition of Africans is intended. Or at the worst the western world is hesitant to accepting the Black world and their cultures because it has deemed blacks as sub-humans. This tenet exist as the psyche of modernization and consciously and unconsciously it allows the persisting dehumanization of Africans.

The Christianization of African by the missionaries is the direct attack on what Africans held as their own religious and cultural truth. Bohannan and Curtain (1988: 61) reflect on the penetration of Africa by Colonial Christianity, they asserted: "Missionaries also began to enter the field in force at this point, and it was they who pointed out that African religion was not merely the absence of religious truth but was "a positive evil". These men in their writings very often equated their own "worst passions" with the deified forms in African religions".

I have made the following assertion based on the view that as part of the decolonialization process of Africa and inculturation. There is a need then to properly diagnose the illegitimacy of so-called "Christian marriages". By making an assertion that it highly possibly that the church polity and state polity that informs the world with regards to marriage, in particular African marriage. Are probably not even Christian marriages considering that Christianity stems out of Judaism/Hebrew culture. It is the first and direct influence to the Christian faith. The Layman's Bible Encyclopedia records the following about marriage: "The mutual relation of husband and wife; wedlock; the social institution whereby men and women are joined in a special kind of social and legal dependence for the purpose of founding and maintaining a family. The creation account indicates clearly that the family is the central unity in society and that

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its character and maintenance is determined by marriage. Here man is seen to be less than complete man without a helper and companion" (Martin: 1964: 499-500).

This understanding of marriage is what African have always understood before colonialism. "One of the great tragedies of this world that confronted black people was that of the white person wanting to be revered as God: the creature wanting to be revered as the creator. And the creature in this world of abject suffering sought to separate the bodies and the souls of black people. It was this false understanding of humanity which made the Moravian church in the Caribbean own slaves and plead with the slaves to be better slaves" (Erskine: 1981: 38). This points that in fact if white supremacy did not approach blacks from a premise of some form of human deity it would have been impossible to try and destroy African culture and Africans themselves. However the deity status and self-veneration of whites to blacks enabled them to do as such to blacks and instil fear and self-hatred to blacks.

While the truth of the matter is that African traits are found in the Bible to further authenticate the case of the authenticity of Blacks and their culture. Erskine argues: "Scholars and missionaries alike testify to the fact that Africans find the Old Testament easy to understand. The atmosphere of the Old Testament is like the Atmosphere they breathe. Their agricultural style of, their talk about offspring, their longing for offspring, and the concrete ways in which they talk about God and people, "these and many other features make this literature an appropriate vehicle of spiritual message"" (Erskine: 1981: 37). While Hopkins and Antonia recorded: "From the earliest years of their captivity, transplanted Africans, denied access to other forms of self-affirmation and collective power have used religion and its various institutions as the principal expression of their people hood and their will both to exist and to improve their condition" (Hopkins & Antonia: 2012: 19).

The reason that this point of the compatibility of African life and culture with the Biblical life is that even whites churches have not studied diligently the history of the black church. More so in relation to the life, people, times and cultures of the ancient Biblical world. DN Hopkins & EP Antioa in their book The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology: "...the reinterpretation and synthesis of transplanted and newly acquired religious systems, mainly evangelical Protestantism produced a distinctive African American religious consciousness. Out of this mystical, survival-oriented

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consciousness, part African and part European, the shout songs and spirituals, expressing the loneliness and sorrow of a stolen people, emerged on plantations, (Hopkins & Antonia: 2012: 21).

While Ayelew asserts: "At least during the first phase of the anti-colonial struggle the new messianic religions which have been appearing in colonies of Africa, Latin America and Asia, have a progressive character in so far as by preaching the Africanization or adoption of Christian doctrines to local conditions they fan the embers of a nascent nationalism and present the struggle against colonialism as a struggle against the deformations of colonial Christianity, (Ayelew: 1974:38). The blending of Christianity and the Old Testament especially, was relevant to African/blacks on both accounts of its history, culture and life.

Rhodes on commenting on Black Theology, Black Power, And the Black Experience states: "Most blacks accepted the slave brand of Christianity at face value. Moreover, white missionaries persuaded the blacks that life on earth was insignificant because "obedient servants of God could expect a reward in heaven in heaven after death". The white interpretation of Christianity effectively divested the slaves of any concern they might have had about their freedom in the present" (Rhodes: N/D: 2). It is clear that if the slave brand of Christianity was to justify oppression of Africans then it would obliterate African cultures.

Colonialism and colonial Christianity resulted into a subjugation that required black masses to render themselves to a foreign God and religion while dismissing their authentic humanity, culture and heritage. James Cone rightly argued: "For blacks in white churches, the white denial of the theological value of black history and culture in the doing of theology meant a denial of black humanity and an establishment of white Christianity as normative for all Christians. Therefore the fight was not just for the acquisition of economic and political rights, but also for the establishment of the dignity of black humanity as defined in its cultural past and in its current fight for material freedom" (Cone: 1984: 47).

4.4. Comparative Study of African Culture and the Bible

So it is then clear in having understood the history of the emanation of a notion of a black church and the influence of Scripture particularly the Old Testament to Africans. It is then makes clear that the parallels that exist in the African culture were located in Scripture for blacks. But to validate this view one can then reflect on these parallel exist. For starters consider the role of lobola, Shope argued: "In the past, lobolo forged a relational bond among families, and, as the older women in the community recall, it celebrated the addition of the woman into the husband's family. Most rural women perceive lobolo as 'very good for them because it creates a great friendship. It is a way of making a relationship between two families'. Through the negotiation of lobolo, families are brought together and united; the transfer of lobolo creates a web of affiliations that stretches across generations and urban/rural locales" (Shope: 2011: 65-66). Martin on other hand asserts:

"In the Old Testament it was deemed preferable for a man to choose as his bride a woman not so far removed from his own family as to be unfamiliar or unsympathetic with the prevailing customs and religious beliefs. There were, however, certain close relatives with whom marriage was prevented. When a marriage was contracted the bridegroom paid to the bride's family a "bride price" to offset, symbolically as well as materially, the loss of the daughter. Before the actual consummation of the marriage there was a period of betrothal, during which the couple were considered to be man and wife   (Martin: 1964: 500).

Lumbala (1989: 71) asserted: "The gift of a dowry is a powerful symbol of marriage in African society. The dowry is called "the symbol of alliance" given by the family that receives the female to the family that allows one of its members to leave. In fact, the receiving family never stops "giving" the dowry, because it never finishes giving thank for such a great gift".

The point here is that though the interpretation of the "bride price" or lobola may vary the main issue is that this concept is entailed in both cultures for almost similar purposes. Though the African culture, lobola, has been taken to mean the purchase of the woman. Though that view is informed by colonialism and its miss-understanding of Christianity, Hastings stated concerning effects of colonial Christianity and its

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penetration into culture and tribe: "It bit into the cultural context of political institution just as it did into marital institution. It may take generations for a replacement of comparable credibility to be found for what was lost with conversion" (Hastings: 1979: 18).

Nsereko asserted: "Viewed from the standpoints of the social function of marriage gifts, African traditional theology, and the nature of the family, it will be discovered that the Western notion of "purchase" was and still is absent from the true customary African marriages" (Nsereko: 1975: 684). Mair similarly notes: "The term 'bride-price', which was formerly used for the quid pro quo, has been rejected by many anthropologists because of its suggestion of a sale. But the phrase which describes it in many African languages can be literally translated 'marriage payment' or 'even 'marriage money', and the word 'marriage payment' will be used in this study. A payment is not necessarily a price, and can be made in many transactions which are not commercial. The system where the payment is made in cattle is the best known and perhaps also the most widespread, being found among all peoples in whose traditional economy cattle play an important part" (Mair: 1969: 5).

Nsereko affirmed the form of payment known as physical labour as opposed to cattle as found among Africans and Israelites in their Hebrew culture, he asserts: "Interestingly, this custom also existed in some non-African cultures. The bible tells us how Jacob, Abraham's grandson, had to labour for seven years before he could be given Rachel's hand in marriage" (Nsereko: 1975: 686).

Another aspect that is found in the Old Testament that tallies well with that of African culture and marriage. Is the point concerning the role of a woman in marriage for child bearing, Baloyi argues: "Marriage is also viewed as the vehicle through which the continuity of the family or clan can be carried over to the next generation, hence the birth of the male children is also regarded as very important than that of a female in the family" (Baloyi: N/D: 1). Another point worth mentioning here, following Baloyi statement is the significant role of a son in the family structure of most society, often patriarchal societies, is fundamental and assures continuity. This characteristic of a role of a son in African culture is thus found in Biblical culture. Martin (1964: 245) notes: "A man's strength and authority were carried on his sons; thus there was an emphasis on the bearing of many children. Although her primary duty was to bear

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children, the mother also possessed considerable authority over her family and was due the respect and honour of her family and children".

Another point that follows this point is the role of the woman, with the role of the many beginning before marriage by providing lobola. As a symbol of being a provider, the women held the very foundation of families which is children production. Though in patriarchal societies women were expected to bare children and subordinate to her husband that did not mean women there was not free will. Martin referring to the Hebrew culture notes:

"The principle role of the woman in this society was to bear and care for the children and to perform the ordinary tasks of maintaining a household such as cooking, sewing, carrying water, etc. Her position was one of subordination and subjection to the men in her lives, her father and her husband. She married at the instruction and arrangement of her father and could be divorced by her husband if she failed to please him. She was not, however, simply a piece of property, as was the case in some ancient societies. The relationship was such as to allow her to retain her individuality, to enjoy a real personal relationship with him, and to experience the kind of love we commonly associate with marriage" (Martin: 1964: 880).

This point is important in understanding lobola or bride price and the expectation expected from the woman and the strength of their alliance. Smith notes: "The traditional wedding ceremony establishes an enduring social alliance (albeit one potentially fraught with antagonisms), and a lifelong series of exchanges (again spoken about as rights and obligations) between the extended families of the husband and the wife. At the centre of that alliance is a mutual interest in the children produced in the marriage" (Smith: 2001: 138).

Lumbala (1989: 71) argues: "A distinguishing characteristic of traditional African teaching on marriage is the perception that marrying is a dynamic process, not something that happens in a single moment. It begins with the promises of marriage at engagement and ends with the birth of the first child". Martin (1964: 500) notes that even in Biblical time's child bearing were fundamental. One could consider the stories of Rachel, Hannah and Elizabeth. But what is important is that in marriage child production is fundamental for both cultures. To a large degree it seems to be key on

both accounts of African and biblical marriages. Child bearing is a conditionality in marriage that then is in fact the expresses the significant role of women. It is worth noting that this understanding was a held common belief in these culture and serves to show the significant role of gender roles and expectation for both husband and wife. This had to be established for logical reasons such as the allocating of roles to play in the home, community and in the family.

Martin (1989: 500) argues: "The primary duty of the wife was to provide heirs for her husband". The family is an important part of these cultures and both include the extended family. Baloyi argues: "I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am. This statement helps us to understand that African people do not live in isolation. Living together in an African context does not exclude the issue of marriage; hence an African woman is not only married to her husband, but to the entire family and clan" Baloyi: 2013: 9). Martin (1964: 245) records: "in Biblical times the family was composed of all who claimed kin to the father of a household. This included the wife (or wives), children, unmarried brothers and sisters, parents, and other relatives, as well as servants and concubines. The father's position in the family was that of possessor and master. His will was binding upon the community which attached itself to him".

In African culture after the lobola and wedding the role of the extended family is solidified in order to ensure the unity of the two families. Thus these two families are joined together to promote communal living in the family beyond the wedding day. Baloyi rightly adds: "After the wedding, this communal approach to life sometimes leads to a situation where relatives in a communal marriage have social to the marriage, following the traditions of the tribe... The general opinion is that the African family is not only constituted by husband, wife and children, but that it includes the extended family. No distinction is made between the household and the extended family" (Baloyi: 2013: 11). In the Bible we read of accounts when son in laws were also counted as part of the family, particularly if it is a rich family. Or when one was a servant who later happened to marry one of the master's daughters and then be counted as part of that family.

The role played by the extended family in the marriages is the true nature of what African understood by a family. Family not defined in terms of couples but

communities, tribes and ethnic groups. Similarly understanding is found in the Hebrew family structure. Martin (1964: 245) asserts: "The family was the central unit of Hebrew society and the concept of the family was often extended to refer to tribes, to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and to the Israelites as a whole. Man's relation to God and his fellow covenanters is also described in the language of family relations, in such terms as "Father", "son", "children", "brethren", the "household of God" and the "household of faith".

While Mair notes the significance of the family in African culture and the challenge posed to it by modernization. Mair asserts: "The family is the most significant feature of African society, and the process of disintegration is nowhere more apparent that in this central institution. The orderly development of African life will depend in large measure upon the successful maintenance of the solidarity of the family unit the course of the modification of its role under modern conditions" (Mair: 1969: VII). She further noted: "...African family life and marriages custom are evolving today. They are being changed partly through the deliberate actions of administrative or missionary authorities, who seek to influence their development towards conformity with standards regarded as desirable in the Western world, and partly by the impersonal force of modern economic conditions" (Mair: 1969: 1). This point is important considering the way African marriages are distorted and how that distortion impact of the African family, societies and African marriages. While always it is Africa that has to explain themselves and their culture. This in fact is deeply the root cause that has destroyed the legitimacy of African marriages to not only the western world but modern day Africa.

Another aspect that African cultures share with Biblical cultures that is a linkage between woman, child bearing and the community is the issue of polygamy.

"The feature of African marriage which is perhaps most widely known to the general public is that polygyny—the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently—is permitted. In fact this rule is only one aspect of a system where co-operation in tilling the fields and herding the cattle is provided by a group of people bound by the obligations of kinship and marriage and not by the relationship of wage-earner to employer. The larger the co-operating group, the greater the possibilities of

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wealth and of defense against enemies, and the more children are born to any group, the greater hopes of expansion in the future" (Mair: 1969: 1).

While Burke notes: "...polygamy is much less than many westerners would seem to think (it varies from tribe to tribe, but in practice some 20% to 30% of African marriages have been polygamous, with a norm of two wives per marriage), it is important to underline that the main factor behind polygamy is not sexual incontinence, but the overriding desire and as it were, necessity of having children. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that the taking of a second wife is so often the simple consequence of the barrenness of the first" (Burke: 1988: 2). Thus what is judged by the western world and the missionary churches is not the gist of the practice of polygamy but rather what seems to the interest of the western world without coming to grips with the purpose of the marriage.

Further it would only make sense that a woman would understand the need of other wives or concubines for simply child bearing. Particularly when considering the legacy of the family. Dodoo validates this view, Dodoo asserts though that: "Presumably, polygamy is more likely to be associated with patriarchal relations between the sexes, and this should be reflected in the nature of decision making" (Dodoo: 1998: 233). This decision making is not just dependent on the man as the head but also his wives. Contrary to how the west sees and thinks of polygamy, women in polygamous marriages had their special role. Mair noted "Women have their own share, an important one, in the division of labour, and both the wealth of the group and its hopes of progeny are greater proportion to the number of wives" (Mair: 1969: 1). But she also noted that polygamy seems the ideal understanding of African Marriages, however with caution she notes that most African marriages were most likely monogamous (Mair: 1969: 1).

Martin (1964: 500) on other hand asserts: "The primary duty of a wife was to provide heirs for her husband. Because of the emphasis on large families, polygamy was common in early Israel. If several wives did not produce a sufficient number of children, it was not uncommon for a man to take additional concubines or handmaidens as secondary wives". Baloyi rightly asserted:

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"One African proverb which says "It takes a village to raise a child" is equivalent to the Shangaan idiom "N'wana ahi wa un'we", literally meaning "a child does not belong only to his or her biological parents." The implication is that once a child is born, he or she must belong to a family, clan or community. Since African people never left anything related to family to an individual, children were also believed to belong to the community; hence every elderly person in the community was responsible to ensure that the children in that community are raised in the respect of the community values" (Baloyi: 4).

This point that Baloyi has mentioned is important because firstly the acceptance of the child belonging to the community. It begins with that child being understood as a child to all the wives of the husband before it could be accepted as such in the community. However in the African patriarchal cultures the husband has responsibility to his wives. This responsibility is also important in maintaining order between his wives. This is done through establishing role that will assure harmony among the wives, children and elderly. Mair (1969: 2) notes the following: "A child grows up in a household where there are a number of adults and many older children. When he is small any of the women may take temporary charge of him, and as he gets older any of the adults may admonish him. He learns a great deal, including respect for seniority, from play with other children. Most necessary skills are acquired by watching elders and beginning to help them at a very early age".

But what is fundamental is the context and there established dynamics in the family. However this family dynamics are established easily among people who share similar beliefs, culturally and religiously. As this approach of the make-up of African families makes harmony in the varying roles of the African family easily demarcated. It is religion also that holds the African culture and family together also. Mair states: "Traditional African society, life every other, had its own rules concerning the obligations of spouses towards each other and of parents towards children, rules which govern the co-operation of daily life and expressed and were supported by a system of value enshrined in religious belief" (Mair: 1969: 1).

The reason for one to make such an assertion comes from the example shown in the Biblical narratives. Between Hagar and Sarah two people of different tribes and cultures. Martin (1964: 500) records the following concerning Sarai and Hagar: "The

Egyptian handmaid of Sarai, the wife of Abram. Despairing at the possibility of bearing a child, Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as a concubine; in such an arrangement, all children born to Hagar would be reckoned as Sarai's. When she became pregnant, Hagar acted contemptuously toward her mistress; Sarai reacted harshly at this treatment and Hagar fled from the camp".

This Biblical story of Hagar and Sarah in reference to the times of the ancient world further reveals a point that is fundamental for understanding polygamy. In that polygamy represents the man having many wives which he is married to that are not his concubines. This then means that all of them have a special role to him and among each other. The marriage is a recognized among the wives, families and the community. Together with this, unity should be expressed in the relation of the children to their different mother. But yet these wives are all seen in the same manner and status. They are knitted to together as a single unit because of the man.

But what is profound in this story is that it marks the distinction between wives and concubines. Wives refer to the recognized union of the man with the women. While concubine, refers to a situation of convenience with no particular commitment to the end. This important to mention for the understanding of polygamy in various cultures. Mair also explains that in African cultures existed patriarchal and matrilineal as well as the elementary family not consisting of the extended family. Mair asserts:

"...both the elementary and the polygamous family often form part of a wider group of persons who live in the same homestead or village and work together. The basis of this group is kinship traced through one parent, usually the father, when it is called patrilineal, but in a larger part of Africa through the mother, when it is called matrilineal. The widest group between whose members such relationship can be traced is described by modern anthropologists as a lineage. That which normally lives and works together is a section of a lineage—a man and his sons with their wives and minor children or a woman and her daughters with their husbands and minor children. Such a group is called the extended family" (Mair: 1969: 2).

Polygamy also plays and important role in the formation of an extended family. Another point that is linked with polygamy is the role of lineage. As lineage is the fundamental factor that determines continuation of the clan or family. Maquet (1972:

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77) asserted: "While each kinship role is expressed by a specific pattern of behavior towards kinsmen, the group consisting of descendants of one ancestor constitutes a closed, organically tight solitary society, which presents a united front to other groups of the same order. These groups—lineages—bring together all those who can trace through real, not fictive, links, the lines of descent that lead back to the same ancestor, who is recognized as the origin of the group".

In the Biblical narratives lineages are found, Martin (1964: 500) notes: "The law of Levirate marriage was designed to insure every man of male descendants to carry on his line. The term "levirate" comes from the word "levir" meaning "a husbands brother". The law stated that if a man died leaving no heirs, his nearest male kin was to take the widow as his wife, if he refused, he was subjected to the general disapproval of the community (Deut. 25: 5-10). Maquet (1972: 77-79) noted that lineage has effect to economies, for good or bad reasons. The lineage expressed brotherhood. This brotherhood stays solid for wars and knowledge that one's seeds will be cared for. A direct contrast of modern day individualism in the world, communities and societies that has deformed and perverted the family structure and importance of family. Mair (1969: 3) noted also as part of keeping the lineage there was a practice called Ghost marriages. Ghost marriages occur for the preservation of the lineage.

African marriages are involved in the well fair of both families as the extended family serves other benefits that benefit both the families. For instance the lineages could exchange among other lineages. Maquet notes:

> "In traditional culture of forest clearings, the meaning of these marriage gifts is clear: the lineage requesting a woman, instead of giving in exchange another woman, offers goods which enable the lineage which bestows the woman to obtain another woman in its turn. Thus the problem of simultaneous parallel marriage is avoided, and the circulation of marriage partners is much broader, since it is no longer limited to two lineages only. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that among certain groups the goods obtained from the marriage of a daughter may be used only to obtain a wife for one of the men of the lineage" (Maquet: 1972: 80).

What is clear is that lineages are instruments to be used as in the extension of the family in the institution of marriage. But what is more fundamental is that they give a

sense of belonging to the children and for future generations. It performs a role of being the bearer of the family's heritage. Thus it is clear to note that beyond all the reasoning and confusion of colonial Christianity and the entire western Christianity that the unit of a family in marriages crosses in both the history of the cultural practices in Israel. In as much as it reoccurs in African culture, family and African marriages.

4.5. The Black church, believers and the Bible

This unity of the families, extended families somehow remained historically in black churches that are fundamentally white by origin. In order to see this in practice one has to consider the role played by the black churches in the United States of America as well as here in Africa. One will observe that historically the notion of a black church and its source which is both the Black experience and the diaspora. That the black church held emphasis on human relationship, James Cone in the book For My People Black Theology and the Black Church, 1984, asserted: "In the Bible there is a close connection among God's love, God's justice or righteousness and human rights. Black theology maintains that you cannot talk about God's love without talking about God's righteousness or justice.

These both assume concrete form in the relationship between God and humanity and in our interpersonal relationships" (Cone: 1984: 194). Dwane (Dwane: 2004: 76) writing on the history of black traditional churches asserts: "In the stories of the leaders of this movement, i.e. Nehemiah Tile, Mangena Mokone and James Mata Dwane, there is the common theme of humiliation at the hands of white missionaries; suffering which alienated them from the "mission" churches, and drove them into a wilderness where they found a home for themselves which they could call their own, and in which they were able to bind one another's wounds, defend their values, and assert the right to think for themselves and maintain their maintain their human dignity". The following appears in the Concise dictionary of the Christian World Mission commenting of the African Independent Churches:

Most bodies have separated from historical (mission) churches, Catholic and Protestant, as a result of a range of immediate causes which have striking parallels

from one side of the continent to the other. It is generally agreed that the major underlying cause common to all movements is the clash of three cultures (traditional, secular European and missionary) and the resulting tension and disruption in the life of African tribes. An important fact evident in the majority of cases has been the availability of vernacular translations of the Scriptures, which have served as an independent standard of reference against which missions and missionaries could be judged. (Neil et al:1971:9).

Further the unity that has been instrument in the African culture, society, family and marriages was maintained in the church of dislocated and disposed people. The black church in the United State remained in the attempt to keep African values together. The Gospel within the Black Church is not restricted to souls. But included saving black from their encounter with white Christianity that has left them filled with a void.

> "...both historically and currently, Black churches have assumed diverse responsibilities beyond spreading the Gospel to save souls. While the function of Black churches provides some clues about this religious institution, those clues also reveal that Black churches provided more than traditional religious instruction. Consequently, a fundamental understanding of the functions of Black churches requires some knowledge about how race, racism, and racial discrimination have impacted the spiritual needs of African American people" (Martin: 2011: 2).

Others on the other hand argue that the weakness posed to the Black church is that of individuality, which can be seen as a direct effect of the breaking of the African family. The criticism one supposes stems from the fact that some black churches have been reversed back to the Gospel of colonial Christianity and restricted by church polities and dogmas. Cardinal Morifa Imarogbe comments:

> "The Black Church is in conflict because it has adopted a gospel of salvation rather than a gospel of liberation. The two are not the same and it is impossible to build a Black Nation without rejecting the gospel of salvation, which is an individualistic otherworldly conception of salvation—preaching that salvation is the free gift of God, made available to those who believe by sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary and that we are saved by faith alone and not by works. Because of this theology, the Black Church has programmed people to believe in individual salvation resulting in our own gross neglect of the needs of Black people on a whole" (Imarogbe: 2001: vii).

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Cone rightly states: "Jesus Christ is the subject of Black Theology because he is the content of the hopes and dreams of black people" (Cone: 1997: 30). Further he stated: "Jesus Christ was that reality who invaded their history from beyond and bestowed upon them a definition of humanity that could not be destroyed by whip and the pistol" (Cone: 1997: 31). Imarogbe rightly states: "The basis of the Gospel of Liberation can be found in the life and teachings of Jesus, the Black Messiah; not in his death, but in his life and in his willingness to die for the Black Nation Israel. God reconciled men unto Himself in the life and teachings of Jesus, which gave men a new conception of human dignity and inspired them to fight to be men instead of slaves" (Imarogbe: 2001: viii).

The notion of black church then reinforces communalism which is at the centre of African values, communities, societies, marriages and their definition of being human. Leroy Moore Jr. In the Article entitled The Spiritual: Soul of Religion, states: "The American Negro Spirituals are the product of the fusion of Christian piety and the slave experience of persons of African descent" (Moore: 2007: 658). Further Moore states: "To these circumstances of more slaves and harsher conditions was added religion—religion of a distinctive character, a kind of Christianity described by Whitehead as "singularly devoid of new ideas and singularly rich in vivid feelings" (Moore: 2007: 658). These vivid feelings and the African descent reflect how deeply blacks were affected by colonialism, imperialism, racism and the totality of dehumanization under colonial Christianity. That stems from pre-existed white attitudes that were amplified by religion; colonial Christianity. Tillotson rightly argues a point valid in Africa as it is valid in the United States of America, he argues:

African people have a long history of engagement with various forms of spirituality. This relation to the unknown is not merely an American phenomenon for Black people; it is something that occurred prior to the forced relocation of Africans to the Americas. The enslavement and subsequent segregation and discrimination, however, altered how Africans in America would worship and engage in the practice of religion. Enslavement did not allow Africans in America to worship in an African way, and, ultimately, Africans were weaned on an alien religion that held in its beliefs the idea that Africans were inferior to Europeans (Tillotson: 2010:1016).

While Frazier asserts the role that Christianity would play to the Africans, he argues:

It is our position that it was not what remained of African culture or African religious experience but the Christian religion that provided the new basis for social cohesion. It follows then that in order to understand, the religion of the slaves, one must study the influence of Christianity in creating solidarity among a people who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life. From the beginning of the importation of slaves into the colonies, Negroes received Christian baptism. The initial opposition to the christening of Negroes gradually disappeared when laws made it clear that slaves did not become free through the acceptance of the Christian faith and baptism (Frazier 1964: 6).

James Cone in the Book God of the Oppressed stated: "Truth cannot be separated from the people's struggle and hopes and dreams that arise from that struggle. Truth is that transcendent reality, disclosed in the people's struggle for liberation, which enables them to know that their fight for freedom is not futile" (Cone: 1997:16). This then enables one to understand the role black churches have to play to challenge the authenticity of what today is believed to be the nominative, which is western interpretation of Christianity and its polities ecclesiastically and politically. They need to possess the vigour and strength of the Revival.

Moore comments: "The Baptists and Methodists were pre-eminently churches of the revival. They emerged from the awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries. The revivals, before they were domesticated, burned with a consuming fire all who fell before them. They were not respecters of persons and could as readily spilt mainline and established churches as appeal to the nobodies, the down-and-outs and, yes, even the slaves" (Moore: 2007: 660). Furthermore Moore continues to reflect on the effect of the Revival on black people:

"...a religion elevating him beyond the tribulations of daily existence to realms of glory, to a direct experiences with God, almost a fusion of the soul in God, bypassing all intermediaries –and in this case the black man worry was not priests, bishops and kings, but masters, overseers and drivers. In his soul, in the recesses of himself and in the company of his brother believers, he was free from his oppressors at last, free in himself and free in God. At home to himself, he became again master of his own

situation. This is what this religion, this ecstatic enthusiastic religion of popular evangelicalism could be" (Moore: 2007: 661).

There reason why one has to mention these points is due to the fact that it is time for historically white churches to begin to see the relevance of the notion of a black church. In order to enable them to understand how Christianity in the Black World is linked to Africa, Africans, their cultures, spirituality and their blackness. Stewart rightly remarks:

In speaking of the black church, we are not saying that it is some monolithic, homogenized institution devoid of diversity and variety. Some have argued that there is no black in the singular sense of the term because there are too many variations within black culture and black religious beliefs and that the black church is really a confluence of different cultures, hermeneutics, and interpretations of the black religious experience. While this may be true, the black church remains representative of a uniform system of values and beliefs that facilitate the empowerment, transformation, and liberation of African-American people on various levels. Be they black Episcopalians, black Baptists, or black Methodists, black churches have a common goal that is to meliorate the spiritual, economic, social, political, and cultural realities of black people in America (Stewart:1999:103104).

4.6. Coherence of African culture, marriage with the Bible

We have had to make a comparative study between the Hebrew culture and the African culture in reference to marriage in particular. Firstly due the closeness Christianity shares with the Israelites. Secondly due to the fact that a careful consideration of these cultures shows that in the same manner that Christianity finds the value of Hebrew culture in the Christian religion. What is found in the Hebrew culture, particularly in the institution of marriage. That includes polygamy and dowry; these too are found in the African culture. While Hebrew culture is not seen heathen similarly the African culture in marriage must not be seen as such. Western Christianity has to find the authenticity of African marriages as found in Hebrew marriages.

Furthermore ideologically during colonialism the white churches expressed themselves as the chosen people of God. By using reference to the Old Testament although the African life, marriage and culture is close to the Hebrew culture than theirs. So if no vile, well not at least as the one expressed by white Christianity to Africans, is not found in the Hebrew legitimacy of marriage. African marriage needs also be treated in similar respect. While the situation that was availed by colonial Christianity and the Bible had two factors at the core of it in rubbishing black life and history. One was that of oppression and the latter which is more optimistic is that Blacks could judge the word of God for themselves. It was through self-reading that Africans found their own salvation and close relation to the Bible, as noted by Mugambi: "The failure of the modern missionary enterprise to openly condemn and combat colonialism comprised acceptability of missionaries to Africans, but it did not compromise the Gospel. Rather, African Christians became empowered by the conversion to struggle for their humanization and liberation. This situation has continued in Southern Africa" (Mugambi: 1989: 18).

However one thing that stands out as fundamental in this comparative studies is that the heart of church polity is not the diverseness of cultures. Verses western Christianity and its own culture but rather there issue stems from racism and white supremacy, De Gruchy comments:

> "Calvinism had explicitly spoken of the unity of the Church as transcending the barriers of ethnicity and had even declared that Muslims and non-Europeans (he used the word "Barbarians) were the brothers and neighbours of Christians. But it is in this shift from religion as the boundary line between settlers and the indigenous population to race and ethnicity as the demarcation barrier that we discern the beginnings of the shifts from Dutch Calvinism as such to what was to become Afrikaner Calvinism" (De Gruchy: 2011: 307-308).

An approach that is quite contrary to what is said concerning Calvin and the Christian faith. The reality is that the reason why African marriages are not recognized in western church polities, even now in the period of inculturation/Africanization is a reality that whiteness is always a yardstick to blackness in all areas of life. Thus one does not need to be blind to the fact that the failure of western churches polities to recognize African marriages is purely the embedded psyche of white supremacy. And

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those continually wanting to play master and monitor to blacks, thus what is a norm to him/her must be a norm for blacks. Consider that if a Jew converts to Christianity, he or she can be a Christian and still be practicing his/her Jewish culture, particularly in marriage without being frowned upon. But that is not the case for blacks instead everything black is seen as pagan, backwards and heathen. The Hebrew influence to Christianity as it begun in Jerusalem is not the same Christianity that was established in Europe. Particularly the point that European Christianity is filled with stereotypes, condescending attitudes and at the heart of it is ignorance and arrogance that is informed by racism and white supremacy.

4.7. Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that African belief systems are not as strange to the Israelites for instance. We have also seen that the attempt at conquest has resulted in the intentional assimilation of one culture into the dominant culture. We have also taken note of the fact that the Church order of the URCSA, which could be construed as the guideline for Christian life, is simply an extension of a Christian faith that insist in having the only right to speak.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In the first chapter we set out our problem for this study and suggested a way of going about collecting research. In the second chapter we had noted the challenges brought about by the meeting of the West and Africa. We noted that, colonial Christianity and the entire colonialist project outlawed the value of African marriages. We also noted the significance of church polity within the subject of ecclesiology. This we believe was significant also if the Reformed faith was going to consider expanding itself to the natives. Such expansion was not going to be without consequences as we noted in the chapters that deal with the example of African Marriages.

That the meeting of two cultures or worldviews would be problematic was not without chance. This is so, we have seen because of the former asserting her truth as the ideal and providing no space for debate in the encounter. The process of proselytizing also had an impact on the very people who were to be assimilated into this newly discovered faith. This was to have further implications on how they were to view themselves going forward. Not was this to be confined to faith issues. We have seen that this process of assimilation in fact had direct implications for who was to be considered human and who was not.

The legitimacy of African people as people/human beings also reflects how it is questioned in marriage and how it has in turn it has carried down traditional and historically dating to the present the lack of optimism on the part of Africans to authenticating themselves and finding value in their way of doing things. The point which will be made more strongly in the following chapter is one which calls for the African marriage systems as a way of life and must be revisited in the present context. That African marriage is not distinct to the biblical narratives of marriage. God is very much influential and involve in the institution of marriage.

Unity between man and woman, together with society is vital for the communal life God intended for humanity in the Genesis accounts of creation of both; man and woman. Furthermore it lays ground for the role and place for their children. Appreciation of man for his woman through lobolo would be able give insight today for

many to be care givers to their wives and children. A careful viewing of African marriages can show how Christianity tallies well with African marriages. It can also show the compatibility of African religions and culture with that of the people of biblical times.

Particularly now since there is a need to reconsider the value that African marriages can add to the world, but quite fundamentally so in the African family structure that has been tempered with and nearly destroyed through colonialism, industrialism and urbanization. It is time for the Africa and the Africans to awake from the deep sleep caused upon them by the veneration of western values and ideals. Which have proven in the modern era to be problematic for them as well as the survival of their families and marriages which are dependent on marriages. Further in the present era with all that has come to be known about Africans and Africa must be delineated from the generalization of European history, which is often distorted for a particular purpose. That is to sing praises to Europe and their way of life.

Africa and the Africans must revisit the lessons found; *lobola, mushibodiso* and the marriage to the extended family. African marriages under the new dispensation must be given their historical significance in the lives and make up of people and communities. This includes that even the laws and powers that be need not to argue about African marriages around the framework given to them by the dominance of the world by the west. Rather, a self-imposed African framework that is to deal with African issues ranging from; economies (implied in marriage custom), cultures, histories, education and religion. In the fourth chapter we have also come to realize that African belief systems are not as strange to the biblical times for instance. We have also seen that the attempt at conquest has resulted in the intentional assimilation of one culture into the dominant culture. We have also taken note of the fact that the Church order of the URCSA, which could be construed as the guideline for Christian life, is simply an extension of a Christian faith that insist in having the only right to speak.

There seem to be reluctance towards Africanization in the church. This reluctance sadly is most evident in a time where theological literature increasingly point to the growth of the church in the global South. Yet one must understand this reluctance within the context of the arrival of Christianity to Africa in general and South Africa in

particular. For many, the arrival of the Christian faith meant also the end to barbarism and backward cultures. It meant the stifling of indigenous knowledge systems. Suddenly the arrival of this faith tradition meant the end to the production of African proverbs, taboos and Myths. Yet upon the close scrutiny of these very African knowledge systems, one realises that these proverbs even though they have been said ages ago, are still poignantly relevant to our current situation.

The Ghanaian scholar and intellectual, Kofi Asari Opoku has been very helpful in arguing that it is sheer ignorance to argue that since African knowledge is not documented, it does not exist. In a paper given at the Nairobi consultation in 2009 he argues the following pertaining to the essence of African proverbs, 'An Akan proverb from Ghana says: *"Woben asu a, na wote se okoto bo waw"* – if you get close (enough) to the river, you can hear the crab coughing. In other words, if you get close to a person, you get to know him/her well to the extent that you discover his/her hidden attributes, capabilities and heretofore unknown flaws (Opoku 2009:1).

Indeed Opoku is correct in asserting that, 'embedded in the proverbial lore of Africa are countless ideas and reflections about peace, and how to create and preserve it; and conflict, and how to resolve it. The possibility of misunderstanding in human relations, however, must always be borne in mind and the Yoruba say: "In being friendly, one should give allowance for the possibility of misunderstanding" (Areje 1985:54). The Baganda also say: "People who live together cannot fail to have quarrels" (Lule 2006:40). The Oromo of Ethiopia also assert that fighting is normal, but that after fighting, people must accept each other: "The one who does not fight is an ass; the one who fought and will not reconcile is a devilish person" (Cotter 1996:85). A popular Yoruba epithet says: "The tongue and teeth often come into conflict; to quarrel and get reconciled is a mark of responsibility (Albert et. al 1995:6); and "No sojourner on earth is immune against dispute; no disputants remain enemies forever" (Albert et. al 1995:6).

Finally he refers to five African proverbs that deal with issues of truth or knowledge. Opoku asserts, ' Five proverbs, taken together can be used to buttress tolerance, openness and peaceful coexistence: "One must come out of one's house to begin learning"; "If you have not been outside of your home, you do not say that your mother's soup is the best"; "Truth (wisdom, knowledge), is like a baobab tree, and one

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person's arms cannot embrace it"; "However big one eye may be, two are better"; and "Hunt in every forest, for there is wisdom and good hunting in each of them". The ideas enshrined in these proverbs, when taken seriously, can provide a basis for much-needed flexibility in religiously pluralistic situations. They also provide a basis for multiple perspectives and the healthy coexistence not only of ideas, but also of people of differing persuasions (Opoku 2009:10-11).

This brings us to a crucial matter, that is the matter over truth and whose truth. It is clear that the Christian faith is jealously insisting that it contains the whole truth. This is clearly articulated in her confessions of faith etc. This faith rests comfortably in knowing that it has a monopoly over the truth. Yet this is unfortunately not to be confined to religion of the west only, but in fact one sees this attitude in the western epistemologies as well.

It is therefore because of this that issues pertaining to the African worldviews are dismissed as barbaric and not worth considering. We see this very attitude in that those who crafted the Belhar Concession felt they had nothing to say to an African worldview that desperately wanted to be in conversation with the west. Both the Belhar confession of the URCSA as well as her church order fails in suggesting an Africanization project that will thwart the misconceptions that many have of Africa

That Africanization is possible and must be actively be sought also within the context of church law and polity is necessary and relevant. It was revealed in this project, that the current church order of the URCSA does not provide a conducive context for Africanization. The work of renowned Dutch church law specialist, Leo Koffeman is significant in making the point that the church must consistently change in order to be meaningful and relevant to her times. In his book, *'In Order to Serve: An ecumenical introduction to Church polity'*, Koffeman goes to the heart of the Reformed tradition to make his case for the change that is constantly needed in the church.

I will now turn to the Dutch church polity expert, Leo Koffeman and briefly adduce snippets of his formidable work on the subject of church polity. Under the rubric of church polity and ecclesiology, Koffeman says the Protestant are always eager to

prove church polity in relation to the Cannon but this is a tradition of biblical theology that they share with Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox.

The main issue being that the bible gives spiritual guidance. Church polity is about the lordship of Christ in the church, though in the biblical text of the New Testament there is no singular prescribed church polity model. As such in reformed tradition church polity is a continuous process. As such there exists the aspect of not talking everything in the bible, particularly the New Testament to lays as the only fundamental order for instance the silencing of women in the church I Corinthians 14: 34. at the core of the matter is that in Reformed Tradition the cultural context of a specific Christian community must tally with that context with the ability also to transcend it but at the core must be the harmony of the two (Koffeman: 2014: 15). Church polity is about the mission of the Christ and all things pertaining to him.

The Bible gives a fundamental framework but it is important to note the context of the people of the bible. While this is important there is a role ecclesiastical tradition plays in relation to scripture or scripture in relation to tradition. Both these approaches need also the aspect of reason and experience, this then allows to view what is deducible as part of church polity in the bible. While we are cognizance of the experiences and traditions that bind people of the bible and us in relation to the church governance and the direction and mission of the church takes under Christ lordship.

With regard to church polity and confession, he says the following; church polity cannot be separated from confession e.g. the Belgic confession that confessed that the true church must be governed through spiritual order that Christ taught and left for us. Both Reformed and Lutheran tradition emanates from the same period but there difference lies also in that Lutheran tradition is not concerned that much with church polity. The Augsburg Confession points out to the bishops and pastors burdening the church through infinite tradition.(Koffeman: 2014: 16). It is also possible it is typical of Martin Luther who was reacting from his own experiences to the abuse of power in the Roman Catholic Church. In the Lutheran church, church polity was left to civil authority. The underlining attitude of Lutheran church and other churches concerning the not so much significance of church polity stems from their

view that church polity has no theological significance (Koffeman: 2014: 16). Koffeman points out that another dimension to be mentioned concerning church polity is what he terms as "church polity confessionalism" which means to him uncritical stance a specific church took as part of its polity from a historical context (2014: 16).

Though the weakness he points out is being that others cannot move beyond that confession without considering the reasons for such a confession to exist (usually splitting of the church from another body). Koffeman adds that historical and confessional reasoning are fundamental to polity but do not hinder variation of thought in other aspects as academic. Confession is a quest and affirmation of truth beginning with a particular context. But fundamentally it vividly reflects the significance of proclamation of truth, faith and takes account of other cultures that shape the Christian community. Koffeman notes also though this true they cannot be decisive in theology since theology is about systematic ecclesiological thinking (Koffeman: 2014: 17).

Koffeman deals also with the relation of the Holy Spirit, church and Christ. This he does by noting Dombois view of how the Holy Spirit is at work or works in the church. He mentions Brinkman and Witte (2000: 189) view of the Holy Spirit as necessary in Ecumenical dialogue. Also noting the Holy Spirit link with historical (ecclesial) phenomenon. Koffeman also engages the background to this view locating the background of the question, which is: did Jesus Christ found the church this is taken from Alfred Loisy. Who argued that "Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God and it was the church that came (Loisy in Koffeman: 2014: 27).

Koffeman then notes how this view proposed by Loisy has been the subject of debate. In that to some it seems it is an appropriate of change of events or prophecy. This is seen in that Loisy view is thought to have meant that instead of the coming of the Kingdom of God what came was the church. Koffeman (2014: 28) rightly asserts: "On the contrary, 'Jesus proclaimed the coming of the God and, therefore, it was the church that came'. The church is a *(theo) logical* consequence of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God". This is what Koffeman belies is what was meant by Loisy. Koffeman holds that the church functions within the ambience of the kingdom of

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God. Koffeman also asserts that for Loisy the church is identical to Roman Catholic Church and papal primacy as it stands with the prohibition of Reformation. It is at that point that Koffeman believes ecumenical dialogue is need for clarity and for a common consensus. He however is in agreement with Loisy view of the link between church and the Kingdom of God. What he holds to be the former is a theological consequence of the latter.

This view finds common consensus in the Second Vatican council. That records the mystery of the Holy Church reflected in its foundation with the Lord Jesus Christ preaching the Good News which were the coming of the kingdom of God that has been overstated in prophecy up until the coming of Christ. That then ended in his death and his resurrection in which he poured his spirit to his disciples equipping them and the church. In order that the church maybe guarded right but furthermore possess the attributes and characteristic of Christ. Which are; humility, self-sacrifice, charity in order to receive its mission to proclaiming and spreading to all people the kingdom of Christ and of God on earth in order the church maybe where the kingdom germinates. As such the varied Christian communities historically have been guided by the Holy Spirit. The essential ecumenical problem being conflicts and splits that are in some sense playing a role of each Christian community and its context are connected to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Though this might be so, Koffeman points out that in both sides and cases each of these groups can claim guidance of the Holy Spirit through the splits and conflicts. Though he points out that another weakness is usually human weakness and sin are not included in these believes. He also notes that another major blunder is that of believing that institute that come out of these splits can either maintain the views or at best associate those institutions with the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the church. He (2014: 29) notes: "Many examples could be given: episcopacy in the Roman Catholic (and several other) traditions, or—in the Reformed tradition—the three offices of minister, elder and deacon, the common priesthood of all believers, or the independence of the local congregation. All of them can be interpreted as results of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore maybe even as institutions of 'divine law'".

When one considers then the view of the Holy Spirit at work historically as guiding the church it becomes difficult then in many churches that exist to affirm this guidance of the Holy Spirit resulting in conflicts and shifts. Koffeman thus rightly notes that to locate the Holy Spirit in Church history is problematic. He notes that for instance the Reformation can be a Spirit of heresy while it can at the same time be a Spirit of liberation.

Koffeman notes the unworthiness of looking at one particular denomination in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit. But he also notes that the work of the Holy Spirit cannot be simply reduced to an invisible or metaphysical reality. His view is that that will result in "ecclesiastical Docetism" and takes away the organic life of the church in the world. His indication is that exclusivity proposed by the work of the Holy Spirit in various places is not a good starting point and does not reveal the Holy Spirit.

Rather Koffeman hold the work of the Holy Spirit is in the entire world, within and out of denominations and ecumenical church. But rather is at work in all the churches something that is highlighted in ecumenism. Koffeman (2014: 29) argues: "Ecumenism is by its very essence inclusive, and opens towards the future of the kingdom of God. It requires an attitude of 'listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches' (Rev. 2 and 3). From the perspective of Dombois, unforeseen developments can and have to be taken into account. All forms of exclusivism are untrustworthy, be it from an ecclesial, from an ecumenical or from an academic point of view. And the visible unity of the church will continue to be an issue".

For Koffeman, Ecumenical church polity in practice can simply have the connotations of church polity in practice from and for various churches. Koffeman though holds that there are three ways in which it can be defined and described as. Ecumenical church polity can be described as a church polity founded in a particular church with the understanding of that church's ecumenical relationships e.g. the Roman Catholic Church Ecumenical Directory. This form of church polity is obviously emanating from that church dogma, ecclesiastic positions and traditions. Yet what is important is that church and its polity in relation to agreement with other churches.

The second form of polity is the one that comprises of a common consensus among different churches. It expresses collectiveness of the churches and usually has strength around areas where churches are in agreement. An example of this is in the common recognitions of baptism or the common way intermarriages of churches all over the world as expressed by Koffeman. This form of church polity because of the nature of its form, which is, collectiveness is then a polity that is legally binding to all church which are part of the agreement.

The third aspect of ecumenical polity could be the collectiveness of churches in regulations that can be set together. This can then be given to ecumenical organizations, arbitration committees or other bodies. Though this form of church polity Koffeman notes does not exist yet.

Koffeman states that the term Mission Dei is linked to the missionary character of the church. While he points out that in literature it has come to mean or be connected to South African missiologist David Bosch (Koffeman: 2014: 156). Koffeman holds that Bosch gives in the biblical teaching about mission and historical development of theological reflection in successive paradigms. Koffeman then also points out that from Bosch mission Dei in his Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (1991) that there are varying reasons for its development. Issues such as a quest for justice, evangelism, contextualization, liberation and inculturation are important for the church mission. Koffeman asserts that Bosch conclusion on the matter of mission and the emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm is that his contention is that each generation must define its mission with the needed humility for participation in mission Dei. Witnessing the salvation at the present context and for future hope we then find commonality with God in birth pangs for His new creation.

Koffeman notes that this mission Dei is a project of the second half of the 20th century dating from Karl Barth at the conference of Willingen (1952). He however points out since then mission has become Trinitarian doctrine as opposed to soteriology and ecclesiology. The mission focused on the centrality of God, who is the Father and sends the Son, then both the Father and the Son send the Spirit to continue mission in the world.

Koffeman (2014: 157) objects this approach by stating that no victory is possible due to the fact that mission is characterized by the cross thus the church exist based upon its mission and not the opposite which is what Koffeman seems to suggest in the mission characterized by Trinitarian doctrine. He asserts: "It is primarily oriented towards service to God's mission and not towards, for instance, saving souls (soteriologically) or finding new churches (ecclesiologically). Bosch does not use the term missional, for the simple reason that the distinction between 'missionary' and 'missional' came upon only after the first publication of his book. But in terms of that debate his approach should clearly be characterized as missional rather than missionary".

To Koffeman the mission of the church is about God's dealing with the world, God attending to the world thus mission Dei. This approach has been taken by other Christian communities and applied differently. One of the way it is done is the consideration of the Second Vatican Council that has interpreted the history of humanity in optimism and the light of God's kingdom. While the opposite deems the church as irrelevant, Koffeman ends of by noting Bosch's view that the church mission or mission Dei comes from the heart of God filled with love. It is in mission Dei that the cross is a place of safety and the cleansing of the church is achieved in the community and then directed to the world.

According to Koffeman the Reformation saw the need of preaching purely the gospels. It is under this premise that became the firm necessary task of preaching. While simultaneously this preaching of this gospel needed an apologetics of its own with the reformers adhering to calling and did so. However the flaw which Koffeman observes is that the Reformation was determined by the context of the *corpus christianum* in traditional Western society. The crisis is the overlapping of church and society the same outlook existed during the Reformation. That saw the establishment of church with drafts, structures and its polities. However Koffeman points how this era existed as if the world outside the church did not exist. The preaching of truth was an internal part of church life and the context taken for granted without critical reflections on it.

The first era that Koffeman locates is that there is reason why church planting and mission do not play a role in confessional documents, and were absent in the church orders of the Reformation. It is only after the Reformation that these themes emerged again but under colonialism as a determent. Though today the context are different and these questioned are deniably are to be faced.

The second issue is that Western churches are rooted in the *corpus christianum* raising the question of the feasibility of the church orders in modern times. Such a situation has riper cautions on how the church organizes itself. Koffeman further asserts that the problem further deepens because of missionary mandate from the Western context. Koffeman proposes that what is now key is the realization of the fact that preaching purely of the gospel without engagement will not suffice.

But what is fundamental is the church being active in the world. Together with the unity of the believers, their ordained ministers and others to communicate with each other and their context. Another point to be made is the church needs to take cognizance of each respective context and be able to be part of that context expressing hopes, dreams and beliefs. Between those who are believers and non-believers. What can also be deduced from Koffeman in this area of believers and non-believers is that more often than not believers may share beliefs among each other. But at the same time may share a completely different life with a fellow believer. But a life more similar to those classified as non-believer. Koffeman (2014: 158-159) asserts:

> "I presume that only very few churches worldwide do live in total isolation from their contexts. If so, they probably have to, due to political suppression at the same time; they are part of the religious setting of a Christian community and share in its activities and values, but at the same time they may share life with other people, with quite different beliefs, in many respects in daily life. 'Inside' and 'outside' often meet in the hearts and minds of Christians. From a theological perspective, this has to be valued positively, as part of a missionary challenge".

Koffeman argues that our point of departure is that the Word of God is the foundation of the church as a communion and community. Abiding to the Word of God Koffeman holds that that approach is incomplete. His assertion stems from the view

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point of reflecting on cultures as not static entities. But rather, as a continuous processes that necessitates dialogue. He (Koffeman: 2014: 159) confirms: "This also causes an on-going, dynamic, challenging and inspiring dialogue between Gospel and cultural context. Faith of individual believers is a dynamic matter, including growth and setbacks, and sometimes major shifts and changes. The same goes for the way a Christian community lives the Gospel in a specific context".

Koffeman asserts that faith is not about having it but sharing it with other who are part of the faith or not. Further pointing out that globalization has further complicated the situation but the fact that people are now living in a melting point of a cultural diversity. Thus such a context brings about the urgency of multicultural settings and dialogue. Though Christian communities are finding it as a new experience to live and being part of this melting pot.

Koffeman holds the view that in this regard there are distinctions between historical churches and the new Christian communities ultimately become churches in context. Koffeman notes that in 2004 the Protestant Church in the Netherlands came into existence as unity of three churches. He points out that in a period of about fifteen years the church was inward cantered focusing on church orders rather than missionary church life that is mandated in the PCN Constitution 2004. Koffeman asserts that there are limitations if mission is separate from, interreligious dialogue. He holds it is within the framework of interreligious contexts that communication of other people from a different place takes place. While at the same time one has respect of their beliefs while simultaneously allowing for a setting of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The PCN after its consideration of the mission church and the secular context has since given initiatives for mission and dialogue coupled with new polities. At the same time it has allowed the freedom of all members in the proclamation of the Gospel, something that was restricted to ordained church ministers.

Koffeman poses a question whether the Belhar confession can give guidance to gender equality and homosexuality. Also whether the church has dynamism that will allow it to deal with these issues. Considering that these issues are dynamic and there exist cultural differences can make worship difficult for men and women

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together with those with different sexual orientation. The Belhar Confession is rooted in political context that legitimized separation, social injustice and the prohibition of ordaining of women. The Belhar confession sought to change these situations. On the other side concerning gender equality the acceptance of homosexual is in some sense viewed from the moral standards set by society. That poses an issue to the church because of its dynamism.

Koffeman asserts the positive changes that have occurred in the issue of ordaining of women have led to the deletion of the male article pertaining to ordination. Today it is read in inclusivity of both man and woman as long as the meet the biblical requirements. There has been also the adoption of the 'Supplement, Article 3-a for some restriction to make sure that no congregation be required to allow women to serve in the office and to prevent any male office-bearer might have to participate in any kind of formal ecclesial activity against his will.

Koffeman makes mention of the fact that the URCSA synod of in 2008 under the backdrop of the Belhar confession the acceptance of homosexual Christians. Since the Belhar confession opposed an ideology that legitimizes injustice with the same token it rejected the oppression of women and any form of homophobia. This Koffeman believes reveals the inclusiveness of the embrace of God. Koffeman argues that from a Dutch perspective it is easier to promote gender equality and homosexual rights. He also notes that the PCN has no particular distinction in terms of gender. Though it has its own regulations concerning marriage—in reference to liturgy--without any particular distinction to the blessing of same sex marriages. Whereas in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands the ordination of women is no option together with the blessing of same sex marriages.

Koffeman points out that the ministers have a responsibility of keeping these issues on the agenda. While he makes an interesting distinction between borders and boundaries in reference to dialogue. He points out that borders a sharp dividing lines that hinder communication. Whereas boundaries are place where people can be able to meet in spite of existing diversity. But meet to discuss for mutual understanding and acceptance. Koffeman notes also that issues such as Scripture, tradition and confession make a serious encounter on issues of homosexuality and homophobia. He sees that such a condition necessitates a serious biblical

hermeneutics for the quest of truth without any emotional involvement. Koffeman holds that in discussing such issues homophobia and homosexuality. Considering that when one meets with other Christians who are not in agreement we can easily draw moral judgment as sin. Though such should be avoided in order that we continue with our conversations on how to listen to tradition in our mutual discussions.

Koffeman asserts that since the church is facing increasing of diversity that is expressed in different languages and culture. The church then needs new instruments and regulations in its church order. Koffeman notes that regulations are usually uniform and binding to all who are involved at all circumstances. This Koffeman points out that it creates more problems than solutions. He (2014: 168) argued: "In many churches new worship books tend to offer a broader variety of songs and prayer texts than before, and there is no reason not to welcome this development. it is only natural if a similar development arises with respect to church order regulations. The more complicated society is, the stronger the need for regulations that take such complicatedness into account".

However Koffeman points out that this also has paradoxical implications. This he says is that the lesser detailed legislation might seem sufficient for the church. While it allows for practical insight on others to issues that might arise though he cautions that this might make things worse and filled with inconsistences. While on the other hand in a situation where diversity is a reality there is a need of a more detailed legislation, he (2014: 168) asserts: "…diversity might seem to require more nuanced and detailed regulations, including exceptions under specific circumstances, the authority with those in charge to grant dispensations, the delegation of powers to lower levels, and such. But this easily leads to inconveniently arranged church orders. Probably, it is between these two extremes that churches have to find their path".

Koffeman points out also that part of this issue is the issue whether church order regulations should be followed every time. Considering the differing of situations and there is colliding of church order requirements. Further is it possible to look for news

ways with the consideration that the church order is a means not the end goal. Though this view does not in any way validate strange behavior to be part of the church. Koffeman (2014: 168) concluded that: "Church orders are there in order to serve church life. But this is no license for arbitrary behavior. The bottom line is always given with the question whose interests might be damaged by any decision not to obey church order regulations, and the answer to that question should be decisive".

Koffeman considers that the Belhar confession made the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa strive for unity with the Dutch Reformed church. This arm of unity was also spread among other churches worldwide and this stance caused discussion of post Reformation confessions to consider so much the Belhar confession. But rather about being a confessional Reformed church. Koffeman further notes that the response from European church partner responded to the invitation. By including the Belhar Confession together with Barmen Theological Declaration while the United Protestant Church in Belgium included the Belhar confession in its church order. The church in North America wanted to adopt the Belhar Confession in its original confessional form. Belhar confession was to be adopted with an amending their own constitution for Belhar Confession. In the General Assembly and the Book of Order there was decision for majority vote. Though approval by the Presbyterians failed by a minor vote.

In the CRC the issue of the Belhar confession was dealt with first at the synod in 2009 and there was serious consideration of adopting the confession. Particularly under the three themes in the Belhar confession namely; unity, justice and reconciliation, that which is resonant among the Reformed Christians. It was also viewed in a global context concerning its voice in the global scale. Though there CRC did not adopt the Belhar confession as part of it, it was given a category of "Ecumenical Faith Declarations. Koffeman points out such documents are not considered part of the confessions. However in all those efforts resulted still ion these new confessions put together with other confessions. Koffeman points out that the struggle of the modern times seems to making un-discernible to see the work of the Holy Spirit. In a sense the modern era to other seem to be insignificant the Creeds of the Early Church and the confessions of the Reformation. Koffeman points

out that there is a lot of neglecting the present context. In which there is possibility for the Holy Spirit to be at work in the modern confessions. The historical confession must not to be may not to be supreme over the modern direction of the church and its movement through its ministers.

Koffeman points out that though the Christian community at large is different in their theology due to separation. For instance Reformed theology comes from the background with Roman Catholicism. Thus there are things one would find in Roman Catholic Theology and Reformed theology that easily point out the doctrinal differences. While at the same time those doctrinal differences assist at times do not show the unity of the church. However the major thing that is a physical symbol of unity in the church are the sacraments. Particularly the Eucharist and baptism in some instances the Roman Catholic recognized baptism and the Eucharist in other church such as reformed traditions. It is only theological differences and meanings attached to these sacraments that sometimes hindered the unity of the church. But what Koffeman notes is that the recognition of the sacraments enables the church to move forward in a united fashion not withstanding minor differences. It is in the sacraments that we express our faith and unity as the body of Jesus Christ.

Church polity is bout church order as decided upon any a specific Christian community for its governance. While at the same time church polity is also instrumental outside the church as part of ecumenism and having relationships that are guided by the regulations. In a conciliatory those regulations are in Koffeman view mandatory. He also point to the PCN as a good example for its ecumenism in the Netherlands as it engages with the world.

He (2014: 203) points out that: "it seeks and maintains closer relationships with churches to which it is bound in special ties of creed and of history. It seeks unity with churches which oneness or closeness exists in creed and in church polity". By this act Koffeman believes this is an expression of the Holy Apostolic church that share resonance with Nicene creeds. Church involvement in the World Council of Churches is part of ecumenism. Ecumenism is somewhat easier in churches that share historical bonds e.g. Lutheranism and Reformism; he (2014: 204) argues that: The ecumenical movement brought about a momentous change in the life and

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witness of the churches. Conciliar fellowship is manifested through a special 'mode of relationship', where 'reconciled diversity' and mutual accountability are given crucial importance". Koffeman notes also that the old way of doing ecumenism is facing financial problems for its ecumenism.

Koffeman also points to the fact that as part of the ecumenism the other groups such as the Evangelicals and Pentecostals need to join ecumenism, he (2014: 204) asserts: "… communities belonging to Christian traditions that for a long time have stood severely aloof of ecumenical contacts, like Evangelicals and Pentecostals, increasingly seek participation in the ecumenical movement. Moreover, in many countries worldwide, there is an on-going differentiation of Christian communities, due to globalization, migration, mission and the recognition of legitimate cultural diversity". Koffeman points out also that diversity for unity must not be jeopardized.

The relationship between different denominations is not only thing to consider. But diversity as diversity is different to manage. This has to be a way in which different group can commit themselves to unity in a context of diversity/difference. Diversity is related to church polities; it also considers cultural diversity in our inclusivity. Koffeman (2014: 208) asserts: "In the context of conciliarity such questions re-appear. Cultural and theological diversity produces difficult challenge.

Moreover, there is also diversity in terms of interests, objectives, views, spiritualties', and such. In practice, they easily get mixed with more principled issues. Therefore, a well—designed set of regulations with a view to common decision-making and mutual accountability is pivotal". Even in presbyterial-synodical church polity offer common decision—making of mutual accountability. This is seen in the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa where all congregations is represented in the presbytery, Koffeman (2014: 209) asserts: "The pivotal point is that the presbyterial-synodical system allows for a degree of freedom and diversity, as long as those involved are ready to recognize responsibilities of others. It can be a great help to accept this in times of cultural change. Contexts are decisive in this respect".

The church consists of sinners and the representatives of the church because their human also do great mistakes. The question that Koffeman is that is it possible for a

church to be sinful as a collective. He notes that for the Protestant faith there is the approach used by Luther as the view of the church has no guarantee to be free of sin, he (2014: 218) asserts: "It is not only every believer that—according to a well-known saying of Luther—is always *simul iustus ac peccator* (simultaneously just and a sinner). The church also can be said to be *simul iustus as peccator*, or—with a second vocation expression of Luther—*casta meretrix* (a chaste whore)". Koffeman also points out that synods can hurt people through disciplinary procedures that result in schisms, he points out:

> "Bishops can let injustice drag on endlessly, for instance, by turning a blind eye to sexual abuse of children by some priests. A protestant would say that in such cases it is not only a matter of personal faults of people, be it members of synod or bishops, but that it is the church as an institution that commits injustice. At the same time, keeping this option open serves to legitimize the 16th century Reformation, because its core was the restoration of a church that as such, its institutional form included, was seriously corrupted. The western schism that resulted from the Reformation was not intended, but—although in it's a (lesser?) evil as well—it was seen as a justifiable consequence" (2014: 218).

The church from medieval times has been corrupted. Consider the delivering of Gospel in colonialism e.g. in the South African context. A purpose driven avoidance of evangelism imposed culture of whites on blacks. While some hold the view that the church cannot be sinful since it is the body of Christ, thus it is sinless. Koffeman (2014: 219) asserts: "Others consider that it is appropriate to refer to the Church as sinning, since sin may become systematic so as to affect the institution of the Church itself and, although sin is in contradiction to the true identity of the Church, it is nonetheless real". Koffeman also points that all churches acknowledge the fact of sin and see the need for repentance, self-examination, penitence, conversions, reconciliation and renewal. Roman Catholic-Reformed dialogue notes the need of these that have been mentioned, Koffeman commenting from it asserts: "Thus we are called to conversion and renewal, receptive to the on-going work in history of the Holy Spirit, whose 'unifying power must prove stronger than all the separation that has occurred through our human sinfulness". Koffeman ends of by saying that open admission of the church sins does not necessarily damage the church but rather makes it respond to its ministry.

It is only from mutual responsibility for the integrity of the church that discipline can be dealt with adequately. Discipline varies also on cultural contexts; discipline often at times has been used in areas of sexuality particularly where women are involved. But often it is silent in corruption from economic or political power and to other abuses forms of abuses. Koffeman (2014: 227-229) asserted: At least in the western world, many churches currently hardly use the instrument of church discipline—or at least they do so much less frequently than before.

This is not only due to a certain degree of embarrassment about the past, but also to cultural aspects as individualization (with an increased appreciation of personal freedom), and moral pluralism: on many pivotal ethical issues hardly consensus exists. He points out also that the contemporaries have discredited the church seeing the church has gone at times to do things that are not to be accepted in the church. Though situations have changed the church should continue to use discipline adequately for standard of morals. Even those of whom that discipline is directed must be treated with a fair standard and a fair trial. Others believe that church discipline marks the nature of the True Church.

While on the other side the like of Luther was very reluctant of applying disciple and that approach has gone to influence of churches. Koffeman records: "The Lutheran tradition has never put church discipline on the same theological level as the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is due to the Lutheran part of its background that traces of a more reluctant approach to church discipline can be found in the PCN Church Order today: it does not speak, for instance, of the disciplinary power of a church council to exclude someone from the Lord's Supper…"

Contextual dilemmas express the presupposition s of cultural difference and the role that the church and Christian play. With the obvious move from old traditional stance of each and every church to a relative one for that particular era. Koffeman points out four different dilemmas that complicate the issue of Contextuality of a Christian faith and theology

• First being universality: the link of the universal salvation promised and is proving itself from a local level.

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- The second is an identity-relevant dilemma; this calls for inter-cultural transformation process. That links culture and religions seeing the two are often intertwined.

- The third one is exclusivism-inclusivism dilemma: this speaks to how to value the explicitly religious aspects of cultural identity.

- The fourth one is unity-plurality dilemma; this is informed by the existence of different historically grown confessions and cultural differences in world Christianity.

As such Koffeman points out that contextual theology was born out of the decolonialization of the global South. It developed into inter-cultural theology with interest's aspect of communication theory, hermeneutics, postcolonial criticism, globalization theory, narrativity and aesthetics.

Koffeman points out that contextual theology does not deny universal values but rather considers the relevance of what is considered universal truth and gives direction to inter-cultural dialogue. There has been attempt that has hardly been initiated Ecumenical dialogue of church polity. The ecumenical movement is committed to an unequivocal position of the implementation of human rights seeing them as 'inalienable' and 'indivisible'. This has found ground even from theological arguments that hold to the creation of all human being by God to have equal dignity and rights. This is applicable not only to Christians but to the rest of humanity.

With regards to human rights in the church and universality principles that form the centrality of human rights are applicable to church polity. Issues such as equal dignity, rights, equality of gender and religious differences form part of church polity today. This is also based on the context that the church finds itself in today. Koffeman (2014: 263) asserts: "Churches may understand certain aspects of their particular church polity as having a universal value. They may even consider them to be 'of divine law'. But this can never exclude the option of testing the universality of such aspects in contextual settings, including ecumenical dialogue".

Thus it is clear from Koffeman reaction that church polity today is dependent on various factors. By first, acknowledging historical tradition, beliefs and bonds expressed in exclusivism. Then leading up to context necessitating change in those historical positions. Moreover the role the change has played in world brings the

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church in a quest for relevance and engagement with the world. Thus instances where the church played a role in dehumanization making a necessity of the recognition of human right as part of church polity. Considering that some of its injustice e.g. treatment of women were considered part of the church polity. This new context makes it important to consider human rights legally as well as theological to express the universality of the church and the value of human beings as expressed in the human rights.

It is in light of this that he argues that church law can and must always change. It is this which presents us with hope, as one argues for the Africanization of the reformed church. This is the hope that suggests that African Marriages with their own inherent intricacies must be allowed to be brought into conversation with the reformed faith. In the spirit of African world views on knowledge, we will then appreciate that truth or wisdom is arrived at only in conversation with the other.

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