MORAL FORMATION
IN AND THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY:
A THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

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the degree of Master of Divinity at the University of Stellenbosch

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment id my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: ....   Date: ....
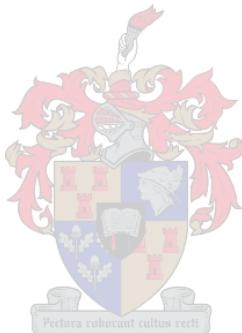
Abstract

South Africans are confronted with the heartbreaking realities of society on a daily base. The question is, "How do we begin to bring about actual change concerning the distortion in the lives of people in our communities and who needs to take responsibility for this challenge? As a Christian, I approach the issue of social transformation from an understanding of God's revelation of salvation to humankind, the church as ambassador of that message and the Christian family as the most basic entity of God's body.

It seems as if there is a definite need for virtuous living and nurturing in modern society as people relating to other people necessitate a specific understanding of how they will deal with one another. An exploration of morality and ethics –that which pertain to the character, custom and conduct of people within a community or society –moves us, however, from an initial autonomous *What to do?* to intimately following the question *Who are we?* The latter, in turn, cannot be answered unless it is preceded by asking "In what or whom should we hope?" The concern is that Christians indeed live by their conviction that God –as the "unifier of the entire creation" –has given us an order for living and that our direction for "who we are" and "how we ought to live" is found in the God of our hope –for times present and for times to come. Moral transformation of society is, thus, not about good people doing good things, but about human beings being formed into the form of Christ. The need for such a people –one that is morally transformed into the character of Christ –is especially of need in South Africa where communities and individuals are succumbed to the challenges of modern and postmodern times in unique ways.

The dilemma for social transformation, however, seems to be in essence a concern for local forms of identities within which moral life can be sustained. It seems, therefore, that the most urgent and crucial task of society is the renewal of the family. Not only is the family the "the basic school of humanity" where children learn about life, but it is also the place where they learn about belief, faith and trust. Parents, who take seriously their task of commitment to raising their children according to the will of God, simultaneously serve as a sign of God's hope and grace to other family members and their community.

Opsomming

Suid-Afrikaners word daagliks gekonfronteer met hartverskeurende realiteite binne gemeenskappe. Die vraag is, "Hoe begin ons om daadwerklik verandering aan te bring met betrekking tot die verwronging van menselewens en wie is veronderstel om verantwoordelikheid te neem vir hierdie uitdaging? As Christen benader ek die aangeleentheid vanuit die perspektief van God se verlossings-openbaring aan die mens, die kerk as ambassadeur van daardie boodskap en die Christen-familie as die basiese entiteit van God se liggaam.

Dit skyn asof daar 'n definitiewe behoefte vir 'n deugsame lewe en versorging binne die moderne samelewing is na aanleiding van die noodsaaklikheid van 'n spesifieke verstaan van omgang tussen mense wat in verhouding tot ander mense staan. 'n Studie van moraliteit en etiek –dit wat verband hou met die karakter, gewoontes en gedrag van mense binne 'n gemeenskap –dui egter daarop dat 'n aanvanklike outonome "Wat om te doen?" vooraf gegaan word deur "Wie is ons?". Laasgenoemde kan egter nie beantwoord word indien dit nie deur "In wat of in wie moet ons hoop?" vooraf gegaan word nie. Die besorgheid lê daarin opgesluit dat Christene inderdaad volgens die oortuiging leef dat God –wie die hele skepping verenig –'n lewensorde aan ons toevertrou het. Ons vind gevolglik die aanwysing vir "wie ons is" en "hoe ons veronderstel is om te leef" in God wie ons hoop is vir die hede en die toekoms. 'n Morele transformasie van die samelewing handel dus nie oor goeie mense wat goeie dinge doen nie, maar handel oor mense wat na die beeld van Christus gevorm word. Die behoefte aan so 'n geslag mense –mense wat moreel na die karakter van Christus getransformeer word –is veral noodsaaklik in Suid-Afrika waar gemeenskappe en individue op unieke wyse aan moderne en postmoderne uitdagings beswyk.

Die dilemma met sosiale transformasie skyn hoofsaaklik 'n besorgheid te wees vir plaaslike vorme van identiteit waarbinne 'n morele lewe onderhou kan word. Dit blyk dus dat die vernuwing van die familie die dringendste en noodsaaklikste taak van die gemeenskap is. Die familie is nie alleen die "basiese menslike skool" waar kinders aangaande die lewe onderrig word nie, maar dit is ook die ruimte waar hulle oor geloof en vertroue geleer word. Ouers wat hul toewydingstaak om kinders volgens die wil van God groot te maak ernstig opneem, dien gelykertyd as 'n teken van God se hoop en genade aan ander familielede en hulle gemeenskap.

Contents

<u>Prologue</u>

The incentive of this research project began with a concern for transformation within societal life –more specifically, the concern for transformation of the kind of community that I have come to witness in my hometown and which is evident in many communities throughout South Africa today. The imperative of social change became a personal wrestle ever since I had a real glimpse on the tragedy of what my community has become. Though the scenario in itself is nothing new to South African societies, I was deeply disturbed at what I saw one Friday night –I believe it was around midnight –as my friends and I walked home from church that evening[1]. The spot at the street café was the "typical buzz", but what caught my attention was the sight of a small child –I doubt if the boy was any older than four years old –wandering around on his own. My perplexity was expressed in an audible exclamation of "Why is a child this young on street at this hour?" My sister's response caused the incident to haunt me and to become an existential urge. "No," my sister answered, "the real question is, 'Where is the mother?'".
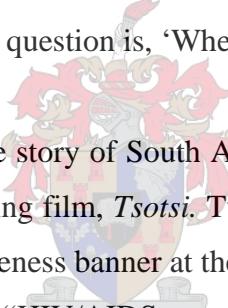
What also comes to my mind is the story of South Africa and its people as it is captured in the 2006 Academy Award winning film, *Tsotsi.* Two things from the movie struck me –the slogan on the HIV/AIDS awareness banner at the train station and the subtitle on one of the posters. The banner reading, "HIV/AIDS –we are all affected" is a reference to the fact that the main character lost his mother due to the illness at a young age. From the same scene where his sickly mother is shown, the viewers see the boy leave home after his dad –a victim of his own circumstances –kicks his dog to death. The subtitle on the poster made a similar suggestion on the "fate" of our lives as it states that, "We cannot choose our beginning…" Interestingly enough, the subtitles from two other posters respectively read –"In this world… redemption comes but once." and "Hope set him free." *Tsotsi* is the story of many South Africans and if there is hope for one, I believe that there is hope of salvation for more.

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[1] In October 2000 I was part of a group of young people in my hometown who started a coffee bar at church in an attempt to address specific needs of the young people in our community. The programme ran from seven until eleven on a Friday evening. After cleaning and locking up the church hall, we usely stopped at a café before we went our seperate ways home. This specific café is on one of the central roads and on a busy corner as it is next to a licenced restaurant i.e. local pub.

Since my encounter with the boy at the café, many questions have been running through my mind as I was increasingly confronted with the heartbreaking realities of my local community and others I have come across –realities that were confirmed by the movie, *Tsotsi*. *What are we to do about these realities? How do we begin to bring about actual change concerning the brokenness and distortion in the lives of people in our communities? Who needs to take responsibility for this given challenge?* To bring about change in our societies is something we as Christians *must* do –we who call ourselves followers of Christ. The question is –how do we do that?

This paper aims at a *bona fide* theory for the underlying principle(s) of societal decline or advancement –depending on how one looks at it. The hope is thus to find direction with regards to a fusion of –what the researcher deems to be –the central questions to approach existential transformation.

Proposition

The objective of the study leans on the supposition of a correlation between the moral decline of society and the functionality of the family as the foundational institution of society. The presupposition is that there is a direct correlation between sound teaching and a well-functioning society or –for that matter –between moral neglect and public breakdown. I have been wrestling with the issues of Christian discipleship and ethics, as well as how to reconcile these two aspects, for a while now. The concern for the need of apposite *religiously motivated ethical lives* has been triggered by the constant witnessing of the broken lives of people. I often ponder to what extent people have their stories linked to a broken home as I believe that all people have their present stories of success or defeat rooted in the predominance of a positive or negative upbringing[2]. I therefore contemplate much on the idea that the key to disclose the predicament would be found within the dynamics of identity and community. Furthermore, it is my hunch that

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[2]I want to believe that all people share this brokenness to a certain degree. The reality, however, is that some persons suffer the consequences more intensely than others.

addressing this issue in the earliest stages of life would contribute immensely to a radical change from what we see around us today[3].

I visualize the path to the realization of wholeness –for the people of my own society and of other South African communities –as the revelation of the new reality that stems from God's relationship with his created world. I suspect that especially we in South Africa – and Christians in particular –have lost our sense of direction due to a skewed understanding of identity and the purpose of our design that is intimately linked to the specific contexts we are born and raised in[4].

Research question

The theme of discipleship and ethics is an involved one and may be approached from various angles: the notion and function of religion, the church and ritual, beliefs and confession, catechism and many more. The theme also stretches far beyond theological and ecclesiological interest to –among others –an anthropological, sociological, psychological and philosophical viewpoint. Whilst these disciplines are all of unmistakable value, the approach of this paper is specifically from a theological perspective. I approach the issue of social transformation from an understanding of God's revelation of salvation to humankind, the church as ambassadors of that message and the Christian family as the nucleus –the most basic entity –of God's body. I thus formulate my research question as: *What would be the position of the Christian family concerning moral formation and the nurturing of true agents of change in a South African community?*

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[3] I am often as aware of the impact of my own background on my thoughts and views as a fish is of water. I was born and raised in an average community in the Boland. My framework was one of a "closely knitted" nuclear family of a dad who made a living with being on the road a lot, a mom who worked part-time, an elder cousin who helped raised the children and four children of which I am the second child and one of three daughters. Interestingly enough we had two pairs of neighbouring couples without children who –to a certain extent –posed as guardians. The one couple since my birth to age six and the other couple for most of my school life. Several families in the neighbourhood and from church formed part of the extended family. Church was an integral part of our knitted fibre.

[4] I am once again reminded of the movie, *Tsotsi*.

Purpose of research

The purpose of this research is consequently to address the correlation between moral character and conduct. The aim is to emphasize and support *the formation of moral people* with specific regard to the Christian family as a reputable model for society as there is a definite need for virtuous living and nurturing in modern society. The theme of moral generation and sustenance is without a doubt of absolute relevance for all spheres of human living, but even more so for theology and the Christian ministry. Theological students, ministers and congregants would all benefit by research of this kind. Doing theology is primarily the precept of Christian existence: who we are and what we do are irrefutably bound to each other and to our understanding of who God is. This study is therefore all together a re-examination of the theology that would sustain the moral formation of the people of God with the prospect of social transformation and with special regard to the role of the Christian family.

The authenticity of morality and community, furthermore, does not only concern the very lives of spiritual leaders, but also functions instrumentally within their ministry as a framework for transformative reflection and a subsequent alternative lifestyle for congregants and their distinct communities. The new life in Christ, the renewal of our minds and deeds and the glory of a realized kingdom are therefore –significantly enough –not for Christians only, but especially for those who do not know God and who have not yet experienced God's glory.

Methodology

With this research, I wish to draw attention to the arrangement and functionality of the Christian family and determine to what extent it supports the prominence of moral formation and the base thereof. I wish thus to research 1) how morality is understood and what the significance of morality is (chapter one); 2) what is meant with the expression, family (chapter two) and 3) how morality is made to work in the family and how ceremonial rituals have an impact on establishing morals within family life (chapter three). The result of the research will be disclosed in a fourth chapter. The critical study of the hermeneutics of morality and the understanding of family relations will be done by

researching applicable literature. I, primarily, wish to access the work of authors who have explored the respective areas of morals and ethics and the Christian family. It would be impossible to ignore the acclaimed works of theological-ethical writers like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Stanley Hauerwas and Don Browning. I have also found the works of John Westerhoff and Onyango-Ajus and Kiura extremely significant.

This study aims at engaging the writings of these renowned authors to search, if indeed, the correlation between the moral stance of society and what happens in a family, as well as the correlation between sound teaching and a well-functioning society, is as strong as I suspect it is. The writings will concurrently be engaged concerning the connected presupposition that addressing morality at the earliest stage can have a reverse impact on moral decline in society.
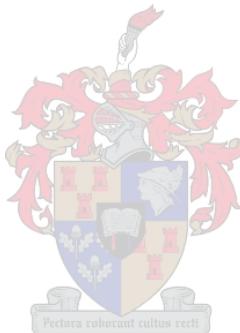
Chapter One: Moral Formation

The first question to be asked about morality would most likely be that of semantics and subsequently that of motive. The various authors who contributed to the book that Hauerwas edited with John Westerhoff[5] placed important perspectives on the table as did South African theologians Nico Koopman and Robert Vosloo. Within the orbit of spiritual identity and living in the present world, this chapter will also encompass a close look at Dietrich Bonhoeffer's understanding in conversation with the more contemporary voice of Stanley Hauerwas.

1.1 On morals and ethics

Morality and ethics seem to be two entangled entities. The search for unambiguous definitions of the expressions is a tedious one as there are about as many explanations as there are authors on the topic of morals and ethics. Whilst in some instances morality is defined as "doing the right thing" and ethics as "having a right character", Wayne Boulton and his co-authors –for example –understand morality as that which pertains to our character *and* our behaviour towards ourselves and others and ethics as the study of morality (1994:2). It thus comes as no surprise that the two expressions are for the most part interchangeably used along with allied concepts like values, principles and even virtue. Even so, morals and ethics are understood to pertain to the character, custom and conduct of people within a community or society that comes into demand as the understanding of human behaviour within a community or society. People relating to other people necessitate a specific understanding of how they will deal with one another.

In their own exploration on the topic, Koopman and Vosloo follow that ethical questions ask *What is the right thing to do?* and *What are the criteria for making right choices?* In order to advance to contracting a theory for ethics one needs to do two things. On the one hand one needs to examine the very act and on the other to consider the consequences of such an act (2002:60). While the focus is on the right behaviour, ethics cannot be reduced to rules and norms. It has to regard the people involved and more so the particular

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[5] Hauerwas, S. and Westerhoff, J. H. 1992. *Schooling Christians: "Holy experiments" in American education.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

identity of the moral agent –morality being the principles necessary for peaceful societal co-existence (2002:42). Ethics thus moves on from an initial autonomous *What to do?* to intimately following the question *Who are we?* or even *Who do we want to be?*(2003:62)[6].

Mark Schwehn (in Hauerwas and Westerhoff, 1992:29)[7] confirms the approach of Koopman and Vosloo. He observes how the approach to the three basic questions on the principle of organization: "What can we know?", "How should we live?" and "In what or whom should we hope?" have changed within recent years. Today the answer to these questions follows on the prior question of *"Who are we?"* Though Schwehn mentions that he finds this development "disturbingly problematic", he does admit that it "provide[s] the most relevant and urgent context … [to] address the prospective relationship[s] between …spirituality [our hope] and education [our knowledge] today." (1992:29). From Alasdair MacIntyre's book, *"After Virtue"*[8] Schwehn follows that "every ethic presupposes a community or society that warrants it and gives it meaning (1992:30).
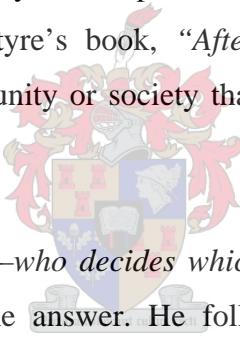
The question to follow would be *–who decides which guidelines need to be followed?* James Skillen[9] seems to have the answer. He follows that "[h]uman life in all its complexity coheres in the integral creation order upheld by God …God is the only order-giver and unifier of the entire creation" (Skillen, 1992:81). "The principles that bind human beings are the normative standards of the Creator-Redeemer himself and not the subjective projections of one group of society" (1992:66). According to Skillen, "both the critical analysis of individual and social deformation and the exploration of how human

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[6] The crux of the ethical matter for Koopman and Vosloo is centred in the "*criteria for making right choices*" and will be discussed under the next heading. The italics might be a primitive approach to the question of ethics, but is used here in coherence to the introduction of the discussion.
[7] Schwehn ("Knowledge, Character and Community", 1992 in *"Schooling Christians"*) admits that he would rather not use the categorical labels of epistimology, ethic and religion, but uses the terms for "rhetorical convenience" (1992:30).
[8] MacIntyre, A. *After Virtue.* Notre Dame: Notre Dame University, 1982. Schwehn considers MacIntyre as "the best-known recent instance of the supersession of the ethical question by the community question" (1992:30).
[9] The author of "Living by Principle in a Complex Social Order", in Hauerwas and Westerhoff, *Schooling Christians*, 1992.

beings ought to live in this world should be part of a single quest to discern the normative demands of the Creation-Redeemer..." (1992:78). Can it be, though, that the resolution to morality is as simple as that all human beings follow the order of God?

1.2 Moral orientation: The story of Christ

In an attempt to address the principle of organization –as Mark Schwehn puts it –"the religious question [would] perhaps be the first to be subsumed under the community question" (1992:30). In other words, to answer the question that both Schwehn and Koopman and Vosloo pose, namely, *"Who are we?"* cannot be answered unless it is preceded by asking "In what or whom should we hope?"

Glenn and Glenn (in Hauerwas and Westerhoff, 1992:95)[10] verify such an approach when they define religion as "the set of beliefs and stories about the nature of existence by which an individual or community derives moral values and a definition of proper action in the world". The crisis, however, arises with the tension of promoting religious virtues in society and the enculturation of Christians by society as Skillen has pointed out. He poses this tension as two questions: "Should Christians act on the conviction that their way of life is somehow normative for non-Christians as well…? Or is the Christian way of life such a peculiar …that its adherents should abide by the judgements of those who [try to confine it] …?" (1992:65).

Stanley Hauerwas would most likely answer that Christians can never agree that there is one law for themselves and another for the world. Their doing so has proved that the only possible product is that of a pagan society[11]. Michael Warren, conversely, warns that it can be dangerous for a religious person to claim that aspects of his or her beliefs must be true for everyone. Such determination may be a subtle form of "dominative power in the interests of religion" (in Hauerwas and Westerhoff, 1992:257). Skillen agrees that Christians should not assume that they alone have been entrusted with the responsibility

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[10] Glenn, C. L. and Glenn, J. L. 1992. "Making room for Religious Conviction in Democracy's Schools" in Hauerwas, S. and Westerhoff, J. H. 1992. *Schooling Christians: "Holy experiments" in American education.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. pp. 88-114.

[11] Hauerwas ("On witnessing our story" 1992:233) quotes Leslie Newbigin from his book, *"Foolishness to the Greeks"*, 1989:115.

to enforce a normative standard in life. The challenge he poses to Christians is rather to learn to live self-critical, loving and modest lives "as they seek to contribute to the health of the larger social order" (1992:66). Skillen subsequently answers the questions he posed on the Christian promotion of virtues when he follows "that Christians should, indeed, act *consistently* as Christians"[12]. Such action should correspond with God's command to be salt and light for the whole world (1992:66). The concern is that Christians indeed live by their conviction that the "unifier of the entire creation" has given us an order for living and that our direction for "who we are" and "how we ought to live" is found in the God of our hope –for times present and for times to come.

If then morality is centred in the story of the triune God, how then do we determine what the living order of the Creator is? Would it be as simplistic as to follow that "[t]hat which is contrary to the Word of God and the Christian belief is to be substituted by Christian principles"? (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:79). *Can we simply know the will of God from reading the Scriptures?* According to Westerhoff, knowing the Scriptures does not necessarily guarantee that its commands will be heeded (1992:266). With the ongoing battle between the Church and the state and from the many schisms in the history of Christianity itself, it remains that Christians continue to wrestle with the mystery of God and the ambiguity to know His divine plan for human life[13]. The challenge remains for the discernment between the way of God and the tradition of humankind as Jesus once pointed out to the religious people of his time[14].

The exposition of Koopman and Vosloo sheds more light on the issue of religion and seeking God's will. Rather than talking about morality either in terms that are more general or in a fundamentalist way, these ethical-theologians prefer to talk about *a moral orientation*. Contrary to an understanding of morals and ethics as being primarily about beliefs, rules, and laws in which we so easily get entangled, morality is about a

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[12] The italic is my own the emphasis.

[13] Indeed history should teach us well that the accustomed practices of the faith communities were not always God's will; that indeed traditional values followed by Christians were not necessarily Biblical values (Marais and Marais, 2002:31).

[14] The Pharisees at one time confronted Jesus about his disciples not washing their hands before the meal. On this *"He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"* (NRSV, Matt. 15:3).

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relationship with the Creator-Redeemer God in Christ; one where we are oriented –in the liking of our spiritual heritage –towards the cross and resurrection of Jesus (2002:9). Christian morals are clear principles when it is "directed to the reality of [Christ's] light"[15]; the light that encompasses a reality beyond our reality (2000:12). As our morals are derived from our relationship with God –who is in God's triune self-relational – Christian ethics is thus relational ethics that can hardly be a final ethic (2000:12)[16].

Deriving our moral values and the significance of proper action from our spiritual narrative would be particularly true for Christians "who profess to follow the particular way of life that corresponds to a peculiar perception of life and of their own lives" (Westerhoff, 1992:262). Being a Christian encompasses the totality of what we believe and how we live. Christian identity and conduct are therefore not merely two sides of the same coin. It is more densely entwined as the Christian identity and conduct is the transformation of the complete person into the character of the personhood of Christ – having past, present and future implications. It is in the life and person of Christ that the world has the will of God revealed. Consequently, "Christians who take seriously their allegiance to the one who claims that all authority in heaven and on earth now belongs to him cannot help but seek to follow his commandments in all areas of life –no matter what the outcome" (Skillen, 1992:65).
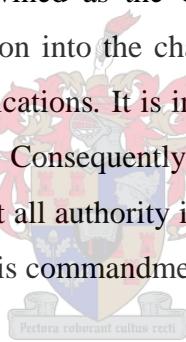
Paul's petition to the congregations in Romans is but one example of how the personhood of the new life in Christ necessitates change[17]. Paul's plea is for the young Christians to live lives dissimilar to the lives they were living in the past and differently to that which they observe from the world around them. The Spirit of God is the initiator of this

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[15] The title of Koopman and Vosloo's book on morality in our changing times is an attempt to capture the idea of morals being about the light of Christ bringing light into our present realities. Christian ethics and morality does not carry the burden of law and yet it is not to be taken up lightly or in lightmindedness. It is much rather meaningful and purposeful (2002:11).

[16] Koopman and Vosloo follow in the steps of Luther, Calvin and Barth who cautioned against an overemphasis of human responsibility in fear of human independence from faith-commitment to Christ. This stance should not be mistaken as one that deserts an ethic of responsibility which Barth for example was in support of. (2002:51).

[17] *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect".* (NRSV, Rom. 12:1-3).

transformation of life in a world of diverse cultures. Hauerwas interprets Romans 12:2 as the belief that "we are called to make present the reality of Jesus Christ in the world." (2000:211). Transformation only comes through "being drawn into the form of Jesus (Bonhoeffer, 2005:92). Other Scriptural examples of how our lives as Christians have to be unlike the typical life like that of Christ himself include John 13[18] and Philippians 2.

It is as Christians who have our being, meaning and direction in him and through him[19] that we influence our relatives and those socializing with us (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:64). It is our actual lives as Christians –how we act and react, how we spend our time, money and energy –that witness of God's will in Christ and that influence the lives of people around us.. It is in our everyday lifestyles that Christians' understanding of their mission and ministry as God's people are disclosed. Such living not only represents obedience to God, but Christians will indeed "experience this way of life antithetical to other ways of life" (Skillen, 1992:65). Since morality as an orientation towards the cross and resurrection of Jesus and thus a formation into his being is also central to the theology of acclaimed ethical-theologians, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Stanley Hauerwas, I subsequently wish to relate their thoughts.
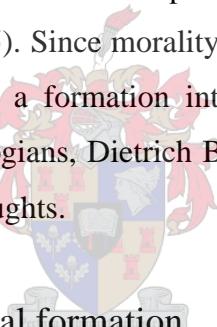
1.3 Dietrich Bonhoeffer on moral formation

In his life Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) –being born in an upper-middle class professional family –went from being a keen student to become a German Lutheran pastor, lecturer and theologian who later became a key leader in the opposition to the Nazi rule. The power of his legacy was, however, not merely positioned in what he did as much as to why he did it. He lived true to his conviction of what it entails to be follower of Christ within the time and space he lived in. His acclaimed works include *Sanctorum Communio* (1930), *Act and Being*, (1930), *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937), *Life Together* (1938), *Ethics* (1949) and *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1953)[20]. For this paper I have concentrated on Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*, a historical contextual undertaking motivated by his

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[18] In the chapter where Jesus specifically models servitude to his disciples, he instructs them "*For I have set you an example that you also should do as I have done to you.*" (NRSV, John 13:15).
[19] "for in Him we live and move and have our being, ..." (NRSV, Acts 17:28).
[20] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietrich_Bonhoeffer. The last two works mentioned here were only published after the tragic death of the author.

desire to –after World War II–contribute to the reconstruction of life in Germany and the West as well as by his involvement in overthrowing the Nazi regime (2005:1). *Ethics* can also be linked to the exploration of this paper as Bonhoeffer focuses in it on society and history and the responsibility of Christians and the church in that public world (2005:5).

Bonhoeffer commences his section on "Ethics as Formation"[21] by briefly recounting what Christian ethics is not. Ethics, for one, does not stand on reason. Those who follow such an approach are unsighted to discern between holiness and evil. Ethics also cannot overcome evil with the good intention of a pure will or with principles. The ones who pursue truth and justice in this manner may get distracted by insignificant matters (2005:78). A person who attempts to practice ethics by depending on the demand for decision is likely to fall prey to confusion. Ethics that are constituted by way of duty might eventually bind the person responsible by sense of obligation to commit to evil. In addition, ethics cannot roam in personal liberty. People that pride themselves on their freedom to do what they deem to be right, might in the end fall by their very freedom (2005:79). Bonhoeffer finally rejects ethics that rest on private virtue. People that are doing good according to their own abilities, do so with self-deception as they often practise virtue selectively (2005:80).
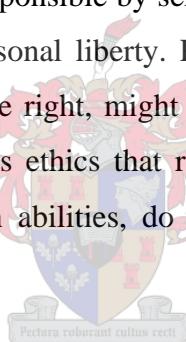
Bonhoeffer suggests that when it comes to the issue of morals and ethics, the question to ask is much rather "What is the will of God?" than asking "How can I be good? or "How can I do something good?" (2005:47). By making this distinction he affirms that the realities of individuals and that of the world are beyond themselves. They are rather set in the [one] reality of the Creator-Redeemer God (2005:48). The reality of neither one's own self, nor that of the world or that of norms and values can therefore be the source of a Christian ethic. Christian ethics are rather grounded in the reality of God as it is revealed in Christ (2005:49). Christian ethics, thus, surpass knowledge of good and evil as it cannot be constituted "by thinking in two realms" (2005:9). The question of good is rather the question of participating in God's reality as it is revealed in Christ (2005:50). Our "doing good" lies therefore not within ourselves, our motives or abilities, but it is a

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[21] Bonhoeffer, D. 2005. *Ethics*. pp. 76-102.

mere response to what God has done in the world through the life and ministry of Jesus. The person who is liberated from the problems and conflicts of ethical decision is the one that observes only the single truth of God. Such a person belongs to God alone and is not bound by principles, but by the love of God (2005:81).

The revelation of God in Christ signifies also that the reality of Christ embraces the reality of the world. It is only in Christ that the reality of this world is reconciled with God. The reality of the revelation of God in Christ makes it impossible to have real Christian subsistence outside the reality of the world and to have real worldliness outside the reality of Christ (2005:61). The only way to overcome the world and contribute to restoring it to being a place where people can enjoy the fullness of God's intent will be to embrace the world and love it the way God does. By his love God became human in Christ and he did so because he [truly] loves human beings… as they are in the real world (2005:84). This love of God allows one to see the realness of a person and yet see God in that person. In Christ, God created –and continues to create –a new humanity (2005:9).

It is not that there is any glamour in becoming human. Not only was Jesus born in shame and misery and did he live the life of the poor and meek, he died in suffering and shame (2005:88). For the world to be reconciled with God, Christ had to be willing to be judged by the people of his time and by God and he had to be willing to be judged on behalf of others (2005:90). "Only in the cross of Christ… does humanity take on its true form". In the form of Christ, the person that is truly human, is the one that is accepted by God, judged by God and resurrected by God to a new life (2005:91). It is only this form of Christ that can encounter the world triumphantly (2005:92).

Bonhoeffer offers this *Gestaltung* as alternative for the "so-called practical Christianity" along with the "so-called dogmatic Christianity" that has failed in the world (2005:92). Formation, as it is used by Scripture, is not concerned with planning and programs. It is only concerned with the one form that has overcome the world, the form of Jesus Christ. This formation is not a striving "to become like Jesus", but it is about our form that needs

to conform to Christ's form[22]. Being formed by Christ into his form is not for human beings to "outgrow one['s] nature as human", but to become the object of God's love and to become a real human being (2005:94); one who suffers, is afflicted, meek, patient in suffering, forgiving and submissive to God. Conformation to the image of the Risen one therefore means to be a new human being before God and living in the world like other human beings only to glorify Christ (2005:95).

Human beings, however, do not become God. *"Human beings become human because God became human"*. God changed his form into human form and changes human beings to become human beings before God (2005:96). For Bonhoeffer Jesus takes form at the outset in the church of Christ referred to in the New Testament as "the body of Christ". That which takes place in the church becomes a representative model for all human beings. [The only rights, authority and dignity claimed by the church are that which is dependent on Jesus.] The church, therefore, is concerned not with religion or religious functions, but with "the existence in the world of human beings in all their relationships" (2005:97).
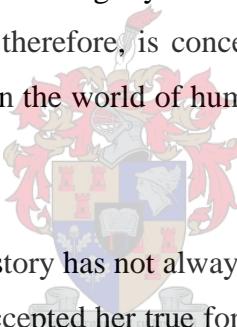
The fact that the church through history has not always been a model for the world is only because she has not grasped and accepted her true form as the body of Christ. In contrast to modelling for the world, humanity was more often drawn into the church. Despite the historical evidence, Bonhoeffer insists that the church of Christ is one through all the ages, because the form of "Christ is one and the same at all times and in all places" (2005:98). The Christian ethical issue is not about what is or should be good, but *"how Christ may take form among us today and here"* (2005:99). Christ taking form "among us today and here" –in loving people and not with principles –is therefore a contextual issue unique in time and place as various people from various contexts have different experiences and realities (2005:101). All being said and done, the crux for Bonhoeffer concerning a Christian-ethical reflection is that it has the sole focus on the form of Christ and the body of Christ as its starting point (2005:97).

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[22] Bonhoeffer includes Gal. 4:9; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:29; 12:2 as texts of reference.

1.4 Hauerwas on Christian ethics

The impact that Bonhoeffer's life has had on the life of Stanley Hauerwas is evident from the extent to which he has written on Bonhoeffer. Besides relating to Bonhoeffer in his lectures, Hauerwas has recently also released the book, *Performing the faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Non-violence*[23]. It will thus come as no surprise that one hears the echoes of Bonhoeffer in reading Hauerwas. Even more so both these theologians were keen admirers of the works of the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth. Like the writings of Bonhoeffer, Hauerwas's works uniquely reflect a pre-occupation with what it means to be Christian. In other words, how Christian ethics should be understood and how it should be lived.

Stanley Hauerwas was born in Texas, USA in 1940 into a "relatively poor and uneducated [Methodist] home" (Thiessen Nation and Wells, 2000:24). Though initially he never assumed to go to university, Hauerwas moved on to receive several degrees from Yale including his PhD in Christian ethics with James Gustafson as his supervisor (2000:25). He served on the faculty of the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana for fourteen years. Hauerwas taught at Duke Divinity School at Duke University since 1984 and continuous his academic career as the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. In 2001 he was invited to present the prestigious Gifford Lectures at St Andrews in Scotland (2000:19).

Through the years Hauerwas was greatly influenced by the lives and thoughts of the humble Christian pacifist, John Howard Yoder –whom Hauerwas deems as his mentor, Karl Barth –on whose work Hauerwas probably leans most and Dietrich Bonhoeffer – whose missional[24] example Hauerwas follows to rediscover the visibility of the church from the ruins of Christendom (2000:30,84). Stanley Hauerwas has written, amongst

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[23] Hauerwas, S. 2004. *Performing the faith: Bonhoeffer and the practice of non-violence.* Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.

[24] I use *missional* as adjective in an attempt to describe Bonhoeffer's understanding of his vocation and character as a disciple of Christ. Bonhoeffer dedicated his life as "a theologian of the church to help the Christian community think in new ways about the relationship of the church to society and about the public responsibilities of Christians" (Clifford Green in Bonhoeffer, 2005:10). The same, I believe, is true for Stanly Hauerwas.

others, *A Community of Character* (1981), *The Peaceable Kingdom* (1983), *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World and Living in Between* (1988) and *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (1989). In the words of Thiessen Nation and Wells Hauerwas is a man who –in the many years of writing –has "hardly done anything …other than to wrestle over the integrity and embodiment of the gospel in a world of false stories" (2000:4)[25].

Despite the fact that being a Christian has always involved moral claims, Hauerwas points out that "Christian ethics as a self-conscious activity is a rather recent development" (1981:89). It was only since the nineteenth century that the relationship between Christian belief and action was conceptually and logically analyzed. According to Hauerwas the preoccupation with Christian ethics is primarily a legacy of Protestant liberalism; "a retrenchment to secure some meaning [ ] for religious belief". The strategy, however, became problematic as it was difficult to confirm the relation between morality and religious symbols and doctrines as the latter became increasingly isolated and abstract (1981:89).
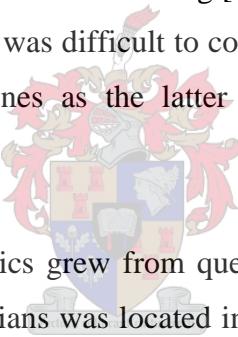
Historically, Hauerwas claims, ethics grew from questions of "what individuals should be" and moral reflection for Christians was located in the concept of virtue as it was for the Greeks. Any consideration of morality began with describing the virtuous life – despite the fact that there was never complete consensus on how virtue is constituted or which virtues are the primary ones. For the Greeks, virtue meant "that which causes a thing to perform its function well. For human beings the virtue would be that which enables us[26] to fulfil our function as humans, yet the meaning and content of such virtue would be a controversial matter (1981:111). Hauerwas also denotes the affinity between virtue and virtues as well as the confusion of their relation. It remains significant, though, that "to have virtue or character involves more than a sum of the individual virtues" (1981:113).

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[25] The editers also accredit Hauerwas with "probably no one has more substantially changed the field of Christian ethics within the last twenty-five years than Stanley Hauerwas (2000:19).

[26] I follow Hauerwas's use of the first person plural pronoun not only to be true to his eccentric style, but because he specifically addresses the Christian community of which he too is a member. This approach of communal inclusiveness is also at my own heart.

For Hauerwas, however, *an ethic of virtue is centred on the being of the agent prior to the doing.* An ethic of virtue reaches beyond duty and it refuses to take decisions that were forced onto its agent. People of character rather confront situations and interpret them as "a function of the kind of people we are" (1981:115). To be a person of virtue is, therefore, also about responsibility; it is about acquiring the skills "that give[s] us the strength to make our decisions and our life our own. Such skills, like any other, must be learned and coordinated in an individual's life and require[s] constant practice" (1981:115).

On the issue of Scripture and ethics, Hauerwas refers to the observations of James Gustafson and Brevard Childs that –despite the immense interest and growth in the respective fields of ethics and that of biblical studies –there is hardly any scholarly material that links the two (1981:56). According to Hauerwas, this void can be ascribed to "the appeal to the text itself" rather than the normative claims that scripture makes on a community. Besides being too uncritical about the biblical text and therefore not taking it seriously, scholars' understanding of the "ethical" is often too restricted (1981:56). A question like Childs of "How does the Bible aid the Christian in the making of concrete ethical decisions?" comes without the consideration of whether ethics are primarily about decisions (1981:56). The search for "biblical ethics" is therefore often restricted to specific passages like the Sermon on the Mount and what is found in the Wisdom books (1981:57).

Scripture, however, is not meant to be a problem solver, but it provides through its intrinsic traditions "the means for our community to find new life (1981:63). The moral use of scripture is situated therefore in its power to help us remember the stories of God for the continual guidance of our community and individual lives (1981:66). From scripture we as Christians, thus, have the example of both Old and New Testament communities from various concrete socio-historical contexts on "how to remember the stories" that constitute us into being "the kind of community we must be to be faithful to Yahweh and his purposes for us" (1981:67). Any form of theological reflection

necessitates a narrative claim not only because it reflects the form of scriptural sources, but also because it is revelatory of the very nature of God and his creation (1981:91). "Christian social ethics too often takes on the form of principles and policies that are not clearly based on or warranted by the central convictions of the faith." Having our Christian character formed to that of God's is not an isolated event, but it is embedded in the existence of a storied society (1981:91).

The basis of any Christian ethic should affirm the fact that God has called and formed a people to serve him (1981:9). Hauerwas quotes Mark Twain who said, "The worst advice you can give anyone is [to tell them] to be themselves". People need much rather for God to transform us (Hauerwas and Willimon, 1996:88). Hauerwas rightfully emphasize the Trinitarian dimensions in his theological ethics: It is the Holy Spirit who perfects God's creation "which the Father performs through the Son" –in the beginning, but also at its eschatological destiny (Thiessen Nation and Wells, 2000:15). Christian formation is to have people engaged in activities through which they learn habits that shape them i.e. "to acquire habits that will put [us] at odds with the world" (Hauerwas and Willimon, 1996:82). Hauerwas's concern for Christian communities to be alternative communities stems from the conviction that the gospel became domesticated and that "we [as Christians] are defined by our context with the world setting our agenda" (1996:68). Christian communities are rather "to have an alternative culture than the ones we find ourselves in" (1996:39). The primary locus of such Christian witness is the church whose first task it is to be church (1996:91). The church, however, is not –and should not be – "tribal" i.e. a sectarian society. It is much rather "the community that enables us to recognize that, in fact, it is the world we live in which has a splintered and tribal existence" (Hauerwas, 1981:92).

In his own words, Hauerwas has been uneasy with having his work –"examining what it means to claim that Christian convictions are true" –described as "ethics". He has nonetheless accepted "the current academic designation" of the term only because of his conviction as a theologian that "the intelligibility and truthfulness of Christian convictions reside in their practical force". Ethics to Hauerwas is thus in essence about

being the kind of people that is faithful to the narratives central to Christian convictions. For that matter ethics cannot be other than Christological or social. "... any consideration of the truth cannot be divorced from the kind of community the church is and should be"

It stands firm, therefore, that both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas perceive morals and ethics as a transformation of a people who are in relationship with the God who revealed his will for his entire created world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The formation of this people into the form of Christ comes by the work of God's Spirit. Both insist that the church as the body of Christ is the location for moral formation as the church is the place where Christ is seen and heard. Both theologians, being aware of the reality in their own time, acknowledge the deficiency of the fragmented church in this regard. They, nonetheless, continue(d) to challenge the church to become what it should be –the body of God. This persistence of especially Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas urges me to research also what the implications of our present times would be concerning morality and the formation of God's people.
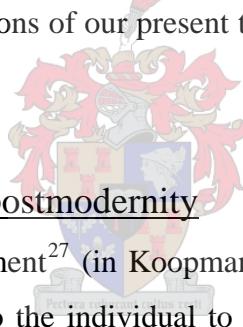
1.5 Morality, modernity and postmodernity

In Kant's essay on the Enlightenment[27] (in Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:23), he defined the phenomenon as a challenge to the individual to make use of one's reason. He first formulated his "categorical imperative" as "Always act according to the law you desire as a universal law for all". Two centuries later, it seems to be all the more perceptible that there exists a powerful connection between general human conduct and the specific times people live in. There have been several attempts to address the effect that modern times have on human lives and the world and even though "postmodernity" became "popular vernacular"[28], Koopman and Vosloo confirm that it is not easy to lay down a definition for either modernity or postmodernity (2002:27). How, for example, does one determine when the former ceased and the latter commenced? On this issue of definition, there have been as many theories as there were authors. Amongst the several attempts made in defining postmodernity Koopman and Vosloo quote the shocking definition of Zygmunt

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[27] Kant, I. 1783. *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*
[28] Ivy Beckwith used this expression in her book on children's ministry at the present time (2004:17).

Bauman[29] that postmodernity means "the licence to do whatever one may fancy and advice not to take anything or what others do too seriously" (2002:29). In all truthfulness one will have to admit that the correlation between time periods and mortifying human customs did not originate with postmodernity, but it cannot be denied that postmodernity presents its own challenges that create unique emergencies.

In an attempt to address such emergencies and to understand better the uniqueness of the times we now live in, Koopman and Vosloo, subsequently, make the plea for a stronger link between modernity and postmodernity and rather to talk of a late-modernity (2002:21). Within the continuity between modernity and postmodernity, it might be helpful to make the distinction that the former placed high value on independence where the latter has a strong emphasis on networking and interconnection (2002:29). However, the evolution itself gives rise to moral disorientation as people wrestle with uncertainty and pain (Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:7). Larry Rasmussen (in Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:7) even speaks of "moral homelessness and drift"[30].
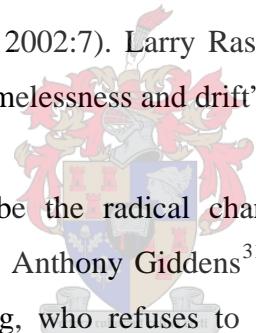
The latest trend used to describe the radical changes of present times is that of globalisation which –according to Anthony Giddens[31] represents a "world of increasing vulnerability (2002:34). Browning, who refuses to "become preoccupied with overly refined distinctions between modernization and globalization", distinguishes between two types of globalization. The first kind is the spread of technical rationality –of which capitalism is but one expression –and the second, the move of cultural influences across the world in all directions (2003:6).[32] However these time zones are linguistically defined, changing times often mean changing practices and behaviour and more importantly even changing beliefs. The extent of the discussion on times and conducts confirms that Christian ethics are not objective of context. Changing times have tremendous ethical implications and therefore create the opportunity for various faith

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[29] Bauman, Z. 1992. *Intimations of postmodernity.* London:Routledge.

[30] Browning's work includes concrete examples of the effect of these changing times on the family life. It will be refelcted upon under "Threats to the family".

[31] Giddens, A. 2000. *Runaway world.* New York: Routledge.

[32] Modernity and its subsequent trends is generally thought to flow from the West and the North to countries in the Southern and Eastern part of the globe (Browning, 2003:5).

communities to dialogue with each other on morality i.e. to rediscover our deepest Christian identity (Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:8, 40)[33].

In times of rapid change characteristic of modernity and postmodernity, the traditional pillars of society and moral foundation –such as its faith communities, schools and community itself –fall prey to alteration. According to Koopman and Vosloo, the issue of morality in essence is thus "not a lack of good norms and values, but a lack of people who embody and lives the good morals" (2002:17). "What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of identities within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the dark ages which [are] already upon us." (Alasdair MacIntyre[34] in Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:58). Though both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas insist on the church as the primary locus for Christian ethics, both theologians, however, admit that the existing church falls short of being the starting point of Christian ethics[35]. The question –in the face of the imperative of the moral decline of our societies –remains, "Where then does one find "people who embody and live the good morals"?

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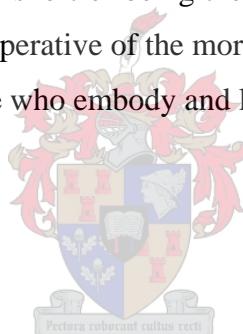
[33] The implications of modern trends on human lives and moral conduct will be discussed in more detail in chapter two under "Threats to the family".
[34] MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
[35]According to Bonhoeffer, what takes place in the church as body of Christ holds the representative model for all human beings (2005:98).

Chapter Two: The family

The enterprise of this mini-thesis is exactly a concern for such "local forms of identities within which [the] moral life can be sustained". The need for such a people is especially of need in South Africa where communities and individuals are succumbed to the challenges of modern and postmodern times in unique ways. It is therefore significant that one should explore the human family as a form of identity for both the ecclesial and social spheres of life. The works of Browning and his co-authors[36], Balch and Osiek, Onyango-Ajus and Kiura and Mvududu and McFadden will be engaged in this chapter of the mini-thesis. The work of David Balch and Carolyn Osiek brings a brief historical view of the Christian family into play, the studies of Browning and his co-authors will be explored for a more contemporary view on the family, whilst Mvududu and McFadden offer insightful perspectives on the family in the context of a changing southern Africa. In researching the presuppositions that there is 1) a correlation between the moral stance of society and what happens in a family and 2) a direct relation between sound teaching and a well-functioning society, it is important to establish what is meant by the expression, family, first.
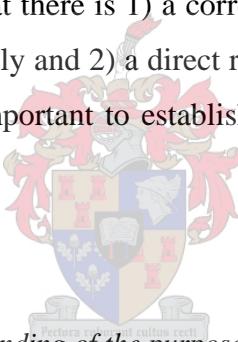
2.1 The concept of family

"The basic traditional understanding of the purpose of family is that of procreation, education, and sanctification. This is probably true for most religious families where such understanding is misguidedly upheld. Being a family is often taken for granted as it is mistakenly assumed to come as natural as having babies is. It is assumed [to be] natural as everyone seems to be doing it" (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:28)[37].

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[36] Don Browning and Ian Evison are the series editors of the project, "The Family, Religion and Culture". Two books from the series will be engaged in this study, namely *From Culture Wars to Common Ground* and *Faith Traditions and the Family.*

[37] Hauerwas confirms that lthe family was traditionally rooted in biology with its core function being the providence of human continuity through reproduction and child rearing (1981:159).

Onyango-Ajus and Kiura[38] touch on three key predicaments when it comes to the perceptive of family: the first being that family is understood and approached with the idea of function, the second being the assumption that having and being a family is an effortless venture and the third dilemma being the injudicious ideas proclaimed and maintained by religious communities. In accordance with the supposition of Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas that the church holds the representative model for all human beings[39] I wish to make the powerful influence of faith traditions on the perceptive of family a primary focus by exploring the work of Phyllis Airheart and Margaret Lambert Bendroth[40] in the Don Browning series, "Family, Religion and Culture". The first and second predicaments that were pointed out by Onyango-Ajus and Kiura will be addressed concurrently.

Bill J. Leonard (in Airheart and in Lambert Bendroth, 1996:11) in his section reflects on the tradition of the Southern Baptist Church. Leonard holds the church's view on the family as being conservative and evangelical with the Biblical model of man, woman and children as the ideal (1996:19). In view of the concern for threats to the stability of the American family, the family is expected to be a witness of grace in the community. In an attempt to promote the importance of the Christian family, the church provides encouragement and instructions for families. However, the church was compelled to change its conservative attitude concerning the idea of family as it became confronted with the realities of divorce and single parenting. Leonard is nonetheless convinced that despite struggling to respond to the ever-changing realities of the American family, the Baptist church will continue to promote certain ideals for the Christian family (1996:19). Although Leonard expresses a concern for the church and home to work in partnership with regards to witnessing God's grace, he challenges the efforts of the church and

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[38]The editors of "Families: First School of Christian life" sadly and ironically got stuck on a traditional and fundamentalist Christian understanding of marriage and family structures of hierarchy and rigid gender roles. I mention some of these under "Threats to the family" (see Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:86-88; 100-105). They, nonetheless, have insightful contributions to make on formation in the family that will be discussed in Chapter Three.

[39]In so many words –Bonhoeffer holds the body of Christ as the starting point of Christian ethics (2005:97) and Hauerwas deems the church as primary locus of Christian witness (Hauerwas and Willimon, 1996:91).

[40] Airheart and Lambert Bendroth are the editors of *Faith Traditions and the Family* to which authors from vaious religious backgrounds have contributed.

therefore holds that "the home, and not the church, has to be the primary Christian educator of our children" (1996:12) [41]. Under such circumstances, Leonard suggests that both Christian leaders and parents have to be reoriented.

The perspective of the Latter-Day Saints on the family is an even stronger emphasis on the primacy of family that the church promotes with its numerous programmes for the family (1996:24)[42]. Although the extremes of the public display of Mormon doctrines were countered since the 1960's, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints –unlike many other churches –did not adjust to changing times. Despite the extent of critique against their traditions, studies done amongst Mormons have shown that they have lower divorce rates, teenage pregnancies, premarital and extramarital sex (1996:28). The "success" of societal morality is amongst others critiqued as the result of extreme fundamentalism and the early indoctrination of children. Mormon mothers are advised to care for their children full time as it is the highest calling[43]; family prayer, scripture study and the family home evening are basic elements of the home life and children are encouraged to have a relationship with God as Father (1996:26, 34)[44].

The Mennonites, though holding fast to a conservative theology and cultural values, are progressively more modern, urban and educated. Their emphasis is on the Scriptures and not on a church tradition. Marriage is observed as a monogamous, heterosexual and lifetime commitment, though the church supports people in difficult family relationships. Even though the Mennonites account for the individual response to God and the Word, Mennonites uphold the norms and values of the community (1996:43). With specific regard to the family and moral formation "nearly all Mennonite children are reared in

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[41] "It is becoming apparent to both church leaders and parents that most of our efforts in Christian education produce only nominal results… We must therefore [ ] be willing to accept the fact that the home [is] the primary educatorof our children" (Taken from an article in *Church training,* 1971, in Airheart and Lambert Bendroth, 1996:12).

[42] Quotes to confirm this stance include one by church presidents, David McKay, "No other succes can compensate for failure in the home." and Harold B. Lee, "The most important of the Lord's work [you] will ever do will be the work you do within the walls of your own homes." (1996:24).

[43] Since the 1970's even Mormon families fell prey to economic difficulties and mothers were forced to reenter the work force (1996:31).

[44] According to Harold B. Lee the home and the family hold the key to the future of the church. Unloved children, on the other hand, resort to drugs, rebellion and sexual experience (1996:35).

stable two-parent homes" while the importance of home Bible study and family worship is being stressed by the Sunday school.

During the 1980's, which were declared as the decade of the family, an attempt was made by the US Bishops of the Catholic Church to define "family". The definition they concluded with defines a family, among other things, as "... an intimate community of persons bound together by blood, marriage and adoption for the whole of life... The family proceeds from marriage [as] an intimate, exclusive, permanent and faithful partnership of husband and wife." (1996:64)[45]. Children are regarded as the primary purpose of marriage and mothers are advised on nurturing holiness in children by especially cultivating virtue in the young ones (1996:58). In the greater part of the Hispanic Catholic community children's faith and devotional life is learned from mothers and grandmothers (1996:69). Like the Mormons, people from the Catholic tradition show higher social morality than other citizens do (1996:55).

In the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) tradition, the family is regarded as the primary unit of the church with an acknowledgement of the symbiosis between the family and the church where an initial and primary identity is mutually reinforced (1996:74). The motto of the church, "God our Father, Christ our Redeemer and Man our Brother" is a reflection of the church's definition of mission in familial terms. Family is furthermore not limited to the nuclear family of husband, wife and children, but includes everyone that is living under the same roof. Challenges of slavery, reconstruction and the Black Diaspora provide continuous opportunity for the church to respond to an ever-evolving definition of "family" and to continue affirmation of all kinds of family (1996:78). This is no unusual challenge as many blacks are raised in single-parent homes [resulting from and] causing various socio-economic problems. The church places a strong emphasis on "restoring the male positions of responsibility" due to the extent of the absent father (1996:79). Moral transformation is duly addressed as a social crisis. In the words of

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[45] The recognition of culturally diverse familial practices and the diversity of family forms grew with time after 1965.

Reverend Cecil L. Munray of the First AME Church, Los Angeles, "If we don't change the community, the community will corrupt the individual".

The position of the Methodist church is greatly influenced by the model of its founders as the narrative of John and Charles Wesley continues to make a remarkable impression on its audience. Their mother, Susanna, played no small role in this story as she provided basic education and formation in the Christian faith for her ten children (1996:85)[46]. It thus comes as no surprise that the Wesley family became a "crucible of moral influence" in which the mother's role was to cultivate evangelical faith, Christian virtue and responsible citizenship (1996:86). Rituals of family worship became the basis for values and provided protection of the domestic life from worldly influences. This pattern became the mould that would shape the Methodist view of the family for generations to come (1996:86).

The reality, however, did not always match the model of the ideal family[47] as women moved into vocations that are more public. The 1944 Discipline expressed concern with the increase in divorce and juvenile criminality. It affirmed the emotional security of a stable home with two parents living together and loving each other as well as the religious security of a church-centred home as "the birthright of every child". This definition of family was expanded on the 1956 General Conference: The Christian family is "one in which parents lived the Christian life and each member was accepted and respected as a person of sacred worth" (1996:89). As times passed the church's definition of the family developed even further to include grandparents and those related by marriage, birth or adoption, foster parents, single parents, couples without children, friends sharing the same residence or even family of choice and homosexuality being the

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[46] According to this source Susanna Wesley gave birth to seventeen children of which the ten mentioned survived until adulthood. I was concerned with the obvious exclusion of Samuel Wesley as I am convinced that he too played a remarkable role in his family's life. The purpose of the author is, however, to relay Susanna's contribution and the impact it has made in the tradition of the Methodist faith.

[47] By the time the new magazine of the Methodist church, Together, appeared in 1956, the portrait of the Methodist family was still white, middle-class, two-parents with children with the traditional breadwinner/homemaker unit being actively involved in the local congregation (1996:88). The 1944 Discipline expressed concern with the increase in divorce and juvenile criminality. It affirmed the emotional security of a stable home with two parents living together and loving each other as well as the religious security of a church-centred home as "the birthright of every child"

most recent challenge to the church. In sum, the family is defined by the Methodist church as "the place where God's love is manifested and taught and where each person is valued as a child of God" (1996:97).

The study by Airheart and Lambert Bendroth include also the positions of the Jewish tradition, the Presbyterian Church, the United Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church as well as a study of the ecumenical and interdenominational movements. The perspectives of these institutions would mainly be a repetition of what was already said. However, I point to some of the convictions that are worth sharing. Despite the belief of the ecumenical and interdenominational bodies that "few matters are more central to a family than the education of its young", there is a general lack of response to family concerns (1996:167). This belief seems also to be the only issue that received recent attention from the National Council of the Church of Christ (NCCC) and the National Association of Evangelism (NAE). The former advocated for day care for children and the latter supported the resistance of out-of-home care for infants (1996:169). Though these bodies pursued the same cause, the author makes no mention of cooperation. The Presbyterian Church deems the family as the basic building block of the faith community and for the church "to provide a community of support, nurture and growth for families of all types" (1996:122). The current views of Episcopal ethicists and theologians include the opinion that the "stereotyped 'family' [should rather be] replaced by 'household'"; the parents' role be transformed from ownership –where the child is an extension of the parent –to education and for the institutional church to no longer act as rule giver, but as sacred and silent supportive partner to families. The relocation of family theology is furthermore not that of sex or marriage, but the kingdom of God and therefore all cultures are to re-examine their actions against the model of Jesus Christ (1996:150-153).

The various churches reflected both negative and positive outlooks on the family. The Latter-day Saints place a high premise on the family and its focus appears to be actual and sincere. Not only does it appear as if the family members are closely knitted and relational, but it appears as if that is also the case for the whole of the faith community. It would be naïve to belief that the Mormons are all one, big happy family and that the

critique on their "extreme methods" should be ignored. It does appear, however, as if they have indeed excelled in not compromising their convictions despite the pressures of changing times and cultures and thus own the reputation of being an alternative community with high morality. The Mennonites seem to succeed in upholding social values, but not without appearing to be an exclusive community and being selective in their support to non-"stable two-parent homes" families. The preoccupation of the Catholic Church with both the definition of family and the role of the mother raises suspicion. Though the endeavour can purely be to the aid of being a more effective ministry, it could also be interpreted as establishing exclusivity and enforcing power of jurisdiction. Any establishment inevitably includes exclusivity.

The value that the AME church places on the extended family reminds one on the one hand of the Old Testament model of the "house of the father" and the New Testament *oikos* and on the other of the tradition of *Ubuntu* practiced in many rural [South] African communities.[48] The care for the extended family addresses both physical and socio-economic needs for people who would otherwise have been marginalized. It also includes a prophetic sense of justice that does not shy away from political involvement. What is more –the church seems to rise above the general division between the church as an institution and the congregation of the church. The "mutual symbiosis of church and family" attests to the ability of the church to be in touch with people and therefore with reality. The Methodist church offers a remarkable legacy of role modelling and the valued tradition of passing it on as part of the narrative of the church. This tradition reminds one of the *anamnesis* of ancestors practiced by Christian African communities as an integral part of their religion. Another joined practice is the rituals of family worship that are the basis for values. The richness of these stories –and the horrors in some cases-confirms Koopman and Vosloo's (2002:8, 40) as well as Browning's suggestion for various faith communities to enter into dialogue with each other.

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[48] With reference to the report of the AME church, it would be more accurate to refer to "the house of the mother".

The family is often understood as a complete unit where its members achieve happiness and fulfilment, but it is –and never has been –accurate for most societies. People mistakenly romanticize the idea of family as a private haven in a tough world where children are valued and are taught values and where spouses respect and intimately love each other. There is, however, "no such thing as the perfect family" (Marais and Marais, 2002:32). Families with good working relationships are in the minority as the reality of what is taken as the complete and stable family often proves to be units of strained or non-existent relationships (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:85).

The convictions of the different faith traditions also confirm that there is no one model for family, but that families are unique and ever-changing as they are subjective to all kinds of changes like marriage, divorce, remarriage, adoption, birth, death and a change in location and jobs. Age, gender and the aging of both children and parents also impacts the family. Each family is therefore unique. Most traditions, nonetheless, hold fast to more fundamentalist ideals of what family should be[49]. Family is still primarily assessed in terms of functionality with explicit claims being laid on the role –in other words the function, task and responsibilities –of the mother[50]. Ironically members of the various faith traditions are principally faithful to the credence of the church whilst the pleas, policies and programmes of the church is in most cases in reaction to the realities forced on by the wider society. The church is therefore in constant conflict to adjust its convictions to the contextual challenges of socio-economic pressures, political developments and cultural pluralism that take such fierce tolls on the life of the family.

The concerns of faith traditions, though very few have said it explicitly, show that the family –in whichever form –is the hub of the faith community and therefore of the bigger society. The variation and dynamics of the family affirm also that it is "a society in itself"

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[49] For decades a detracting distinction was made between what is considered to be the traditional two-parent family and single-parent or divorced families. The former form of family is often denoted as being "normal" and the rest "abnormal". Two-parent families, however, is no guarantee for wholesomeness as they too consist of people who are vulnerable to conflict, social and economic pressure, divorce, death and many other influences on the family life (Marais, 2002:62). Browning, nonetheless, argues for the importance of two-parent families by critically testing and strengthening Biblical texts against other sources (2003:44).

[50] In his *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981Pope John Paul –with good intention, I am sure –ruled the four *functions* of the church (Airheart and Lambert Bendroth,1996:63). Though the functions are all highly admirable pursuits, I doubt whether such an operative approach is advicable.

(Hauerwas, 2000:113). Though this confirms that being a family can be laborious and does necessitate organization, it moreover draws attention to the fact that family ought to be esteemed for being about relationship first and then about structure (Marais and Marais, 2002:60). This truth was hardly accentuated as such by the above-mentioned faith traditions. This lack of insight increases the apprehension that the church is merely reactive to worldly conditions than being theologically proactive; that the church has had a tradition of powerful influence on communities instead of having an influence through its powerful tradition of being part of the family of the Triune, relational God[51].

2.2 A biblical perspective on family

No Christian theological reflection on the family can be complete without reflecting on the Bible as normative source of the Christian faith. If, indeed, then Christians and faith traditions in particular are being challenged to perceive family in a theological manner, the question would follow: How can the Bible help us to re-enact the ideal of the family? How can we reconstruct –for example –a comparable domestic setting known to the resident of imperial Rome? Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Balch and Osiek, 2003:3)[52] –who was invited to do research on the Roman family –found himself facing the challenge to explore the possibility to move from "archaeological traces to a picture of a sort of social and familial unit" around which the buildings of Roman imperial times were constructed. He was challenged to literally read up on family structures from archaeological remains.

Amongst other things, Wallace-Hadrill found that Biblical households were not separated from its surrounding socio-historical settings. Roman families stretched beyond the generally perceived parent-children-slaves units, but were generally a cluster linked by social and commercial relationship and dependency, hence his term "houseful" instead of households (2003:4). This setting was most likely the case for early Christian families who accepted the Christian faith from various backgrounds. The study into Syro-Palestinian households in Greco-Roman times was problematic though as it was difficult to determine whether the setting was Jewish, non-Jewish, Judeo-Christian or Christian (Meyers in Balch and Osiek, 2003:45). Important parts of the early Christian family lives

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[51] I wish to elaborate on this point under the heading "Formation through the family".
[52] Wallace-Hadrill is the first contributor to the book edited by Balch and Osiek.

occurred within the houses. The extended family home was the space where "all manner of household, family and everyday activities were carried on" so that it was difficult to characterize a public/private dichotomy (2003:59). The home was also the place where Christian communities met for prayer, where Christian leaders like Paul would stay, teach and preach (Trümper in Balch and Osiek, 2003:19).

Lampe (in Balch and Osiek, 2003:78) suggests that Christians from Greco-Roman era moved around within the social context to which they fully belonged to. They walked the streets and mixed with pagan people and would even visit them in their homes. Early Christians thus lived in two contexts and moved back and forth between them (2003:80). Christian families who lived and worshipped in the midst of Greco-Roman culture were, for example, also exposed to the art forms of the ruling culture (Trümper in Balch and Osiek, 2003:19). "Themes and forms of representation [found also in early Christian households] might seem shocking and even offensive to present-day Christians [though it] were probably not considered outrageous or inappropriate [then]" (2003:43)[53].
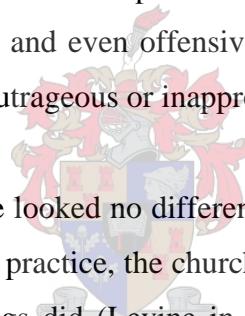
On the ground, the Christian home looked no differently than the neighbouring homes of pagans, Jews or Samaritans and in practice, the churches in Antioch and Rome looked no different than synagogue gatherings did (Levine in Balch and Osiek, 2003:330). With reference to Galatians 3:28[54] the Christian social context, however, sought to be distinct from the Hellenistic-Roman context in the sense that one person stood equal to another as a result of the Christian baptism (Lampe 2003:77). Early Christianity was thus never fully detached from the cultural Greco-Roman contexts and codes, but supported it in a reformed fashion by celebrating, for example, male servitude instead of male dominance; by promoting loving relationships (Browning, 2003:21).

Kraemer (in Balch and Osiek, 2003:131) made a comparative study of two Jewish women of the Roman period who lived close to the time of Jesus –the one, Berenice,

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[53] The title of the book edited by Balch and Osiek includes that it is an "interdisciplinary dialogue".As in the case of Wallace-Hadrill, Trümper's findings is known from literary references other than the biblical text. No reconstruction of the households attested to in the Bibble can be accomplished by mere Scriptural exegesis.

[54] "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female. "

being from the elite Herodian royal family and the other, Babatha, being slightly more ordinary. Both families were constructed around "pervasive ancient notions of gendered hierarchy" and also, little is known of the actual family practices of relatively ordinary people (2003:149,153). Kraemer furthermore proposed that a study of Jewish families does not necessarily illuminate early Christian families as the Jewish family in antiquity had fairly identical structures, ideals and dynamics as its surrounding cultures as well as the fact that the initial Jewish character of early Christian made a swift change from being distinctively Jewish (2003:131). With no exception to the previous authors, Kraemer leans heavily on reference works for his study like that of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo of Alexandria[55].

What constituted "family" in early Christian times were "clearly flexible" as in the modern day (MacDonald in Balch and Osiek, 2003:173). Several Pauline texts relate the duty of Christian parents to raise their children in the way of the Lord and given the fact that the family house was the meeting place for church groups, it can be assumed that children were present during such gatherings (2003:173). According to Mitchell (in Balch and Osiek, 2003:350) Paul wrote exactly to define and regulate the Christian household and to connect "as firmly as possible ecclesial self-identity" with the Greco-Roman norms of household management and family relations of the time. The reflection of, for example children in 1 Timothy, is however disturbing and far removed from a present Christian understanding. To begin with, childbearing achieved credit for women in the fashion of salvation (1Tim.2:15) and is the prescribed life-plan of the young widow (1 Tim. 5:10)[56]. Moreover, 1 Timothy makes no mention of an emotional bond between fathers and their children. Obediently subordinate children rather served as approval for leadership in the church (2003:355).

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[55] Included in the life sketch that Kraemer made of the royal Berenice, he relates her father as someone "with designs on power", but who was unable to support his family. Her mother was the one who repeatedly bailed out her husband in such cases. Berenice was furthermore repeatedly uprooted as a child and later went through at least four relationships with men. Though she was deeply attached to her brother, Berenice treated her younger sister abusively as she was jealous of the latter's great beauty. Though Kraemer notes that one should be "exceedingly nervous" to apply modern categories to ancient families, he thinks it tempting to identify Berenice as the product of a dysfunctional family (2003:151).

[56] Mvududu and McFadden, authors of *Reconceptualizing the family*, describe the burden on women to mother childern as being "locked into a maternal pigeon hole" as everything are directly linked to whether they are a mother or not (2001:13).

Modern Christians often discard the fact that family structure and function in the Bible – just as now- have been profoundly influenced by its social environment and economic statues (Marais and Marais, 2002:60). What is more –they discard the fact that these influences stretched over extensive periods of time relating a diversity of families in concrete contextual situations and thereby discharging the Bible as a manual to construct modern families on a specific model that we find in biblical texts. From the studies done by Balch, Osiek and their co-authors it is, furthermore, evident that Christian households –in other words extended families and not necessarily individuals or nuclear families – constituted the larger part of the Christian *ekklesia* and that these families were highly exposed to and influenced by the socio-historical challenges of their day. The Bible can therefore not be read to fundamentally determine how it contributes to a re-enactment of the familial ideal. We should much rather read the Biblical testimonies in community and responsibly interpret it with the view to discern the character of the Triune God and how his love and justice ought to be reflected in our familial lives and in community (Barton, 1996:22). Mitchell (in Balch and Osiek, 2003:358) concludes that "the family is an entity that can only be appreciated across time". Families and households were and always are "under construction".
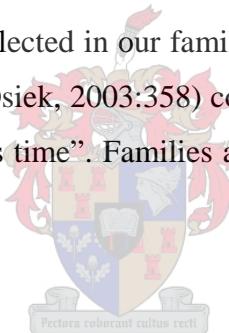
2.3 Threats to the family

In addition to the illusory portrayals of the family –that to a great extend continue to govern the ecclesial world[57] and therefore direct also the social scene –there are several onslaughts on the family life that makes it a place of resentment rather than one of treasure. Instead of the home being "the locus of peace, love and harmony", the reality is often quite different from the ideal (Burke in Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:35). One of the terrors in family life is the horrendous reality of d*omestic violence*. This is often the worse form of violence due to the silence and hiding thereof by its victims (Burke in Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:35). Another strain on the family is that of *divorce* which signifies a radical change in roles for all members involved. Though these forces are

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[57] Despite Hauerwas's persistent commendation of what the church is to be, he fully acknowledges what the church at present is and how it influences the family in a negative way. "The only problem is that the only institution more destructive of the family than capitalism is Christianity" (Hauerwas, 2000:33).

extremely distressing for everyone involved, the powerfully negative effect of the *neglect* of children are often overlooked.

Contemporary movements like *modernization* and *globalization* distinctively add to the strains of modern family life. Indeed not all aspects of these movements are negative, but whatever advances there are to modernization and globalization, they more often than not benefit only a few (Browning, 2003:4)[58]. Modern trends that constitute to global movements –like technology, capitalism, democracy and individualism –have the capacity to suppress intimate relations like that of a family to the "dictates of rational production". They have the tendency to shift employment and capital around the world without respect for enduring human relations (Browning, 2003:9). Industrialization by definition undermines the family as a mutually dependent economic entity (Browning, 2003:212). Since the 1940's economic pressures contributed to the changing roles of family members as mothers begin to enter the work force (Airheart and Lambert Bendroth, 1996:14).
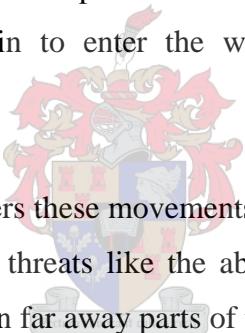
What elevates the destructive powers these movements may have on families is the likely possibility to instigate subsequent threats like the above-mentioned domestic violence, divorce and neglect. Employment in far away parts of the country, other countries or even abroad may offer valuable opportunities for the family and is often a solitary means of economic survival for the family. However, the disappearance of especially men from the family scene as a direct result of economic demands contributes to most of the present social problems. Husbands and wives and fathers and children become physically and emotionally removed from one another. Despite the fact that members of the family are aware of these strains and even if they become embarrassed and develop guilt about the situation, hardly anything is done to undo the tension[59]. Studies done by David Popenoe

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[58] Browning for example mentions better health and longer lives. Browning also mentions "higher incomes for large numbers of families", but I deem it a debatable issue as "more money" is more often an incentive to negative socio-economic cycles. Having more money means working longer hours and spending more hours away from one's family. This consequently gives rise to all kinds of internal and external pressures leading to various social and economic crises.

[59] The report from the AME church in the previous section has taken on the challenge of "restoring the male positions of responsibility" due to the extent of the absent father (Airheart and Lambert Bendroth, 1997:79).

(in Browning, 2003:18) confirm the psychological problems caused by increasing distance and separation of [for example] fathers from their children. In South Africa, in particular, we have the example of men who were forced to leave their families behind in rural settings to work in mines extreme distances from their homes.

More disturbing than all of these effects, is the fact that –according to Popenoe –they are primarily the result of cultural values of which *individualism* is the leading factor (Browning, 2003:18). The individual "needs" and "rights" of family members often dominate the family scene redirecting energy and attention away from the complete family thus contributing to its neglect of the bigger group. Busy schedules leave very little room for quality one-on-one time between parents and children and for the family as a whole (Marais and Marais, 2002:19).

According to studies done by American sociologists David Popenoe and Alan Wolfe during the late 1980's, the divorce rate in the United Kingdom, France and Australia has more than doubled. In the United States non-marital births increased from 5 to 33 percent –threefold in the black community and as much as tenfold in the white community. At the same time, the marriage rate declined with 30 percent, whilst the number in couples co-habiting has increased eightfold (Browning, 2003:15). The focus within the society and in government policies in the United Kingdom is more and more on "responsible parenting" regardless whether it is in or out of marriage. Studies done in the late 1990's showed that children in the US who do not live with both biological parents were on average two to three times more likely to have difficulties in school, finding employment and having successful families themselves (2003:18). Browning also points to the additional strains that the injustices of Apartheid and the effects thereof had on South African families (2003:11).

In line with the manner in which the church and bigger society in general idealize and romanticise the family on the one hand and discriminate against certain forms of family on the other hand, I wish to add in particular the *paradigm concerning children* as one of

the biggest threats to the family. The following passage comes from the book of Onyango-Ajus and Kiura to illustrate the perilous view of society towards children:

> *Today it is not unusual to find parents whose lives are shattered by the conduct of their children. There are many Catholic homes where children have completely lost direction and no longer participate in family activities whether religious or domestic. Every parent would like to believe that their children will become good and responsible persons who will bring glory to God and support their parents in their old age... Even when parents may not seem to do their part well, the children should still do their part as their contribution to the welfare of the family* (2003:114)[60].

The authors continue the chapter with a section on *"The Role of the Children"* in which the expectations of children are explicitly spelled out. It contains phrases such as "children must appreciate and love the parents"; "children should obey the fourth commandment"; "children must respect and obey their parents, *as this is the natural way[61]*"; "God expects children to obey and respect their parents regardless of what those parents do or who they happen to be." To add injury to insult, these thoughts from the authors are embedded in quotations from Scripture. Several texts are quoted as the reminder of "St Paul for children to submit to the authority and guidance of their parents." The application of Luke 2:51-52 was even more disturbing, "He [Jesus] went down with them [his parents] …and was obedient to them; …And Jesus advanced in wisdom, age and favour before God and man." This quotation is preceded by the comment "A child who does God's will, will also be doing the will of the parents and will grow in favour with God and with other people as was the case with our Lord." (2003:114).

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[60] I was appalled to find this "testimony" texted in "postmodern" literature. It would have been more likely to read of such blatant stance in books of at least two decades ago. Not even the awareness to keep an open-mind concerning diversity of religious and geographical background can ease the discomfort I experience with this text.

[61] The italics are my own emphasis.

Though the authors state "the intention is not to condone to child abuse" I find it difficult to grasp how what is said and how it is said are not already a sad violation against the dignity and esteem of children. I wish to therefore challenge this paradigm by countering each of the quoted statements with a comparable question: What about the many innocent children[62] whose lives are shattered by the abuse and/or neglect of selfish parents? What caused the children to lose direction and interest in family activities? What about children's entitlement to have "good and responsible" parents who will bring glory to God and raise them with love and respect? What about the expectation of children to be loved and accepted by their parents even when they may not seem to be doing their part well?[63] If anything, the quoted passages of Onyango-Ajus and Kiura only emphasize the extent to which children are neglected and let down by their own families, the Church and society at large.

The statements made by the authors require many assumptions for anyone to be able to accept any merit in this line of thinking –the first one being that the parents of these children have been "good and responsible" role models to these children their entire lives. It has to be further assumed that somehow something radical happened to these children outside of their "good" homes. Even so, I still struggle to justify the rigid demands made on children. How can children be expected to fulfil roles that were never modelled to them? Why does it seem that the expectations from the children outweigh those of the parents?[64] Children cannot be expected to grow into roles of high expectation when they were never shown the ropes.

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[62] I use this adjective to reflect my conviction that children are enters this world having no choice in being conceived, being born, being born into a specific home, whether or not having a home, etc.

[63] For the biggest part children are in in a discovery of life and continuously in a learning process –as most human beings are right through their lives.

[64] As I was reading the chapter on children, I was reminded of a comment made by a friend many years ago. I was part of a group of young people watching the movie, "Problem Child 2" when this friend of mine came into the room. With an appalled look on her face she remarked, *"There is no such thing as 'problem children'–only problem parents."* Being reminded of this statement invoke in me the desire to literally put the globe on a pause to ponder its power. Movies are a fast part of our world and they have more powerful impacts on our way of thinking than most of us are willing to admit. I wish to therefore add another – more serene –example. In "Riding in Cars with Boys" starring Drew Barrymore, the heroine addicted father reluctantly leaves his wife and three year old son. A few years later the boy and his mom have a fight and this is more or less what they shouted at each other:

Jason, *"This is so unfair! I never get to play!"*. Beverley, *"Well, I never get to play either!"* Mother and son continue along this line throwing their respective needs and demands at each other when the mother finally

The intention of critique is not to throw back stones at the authors. However, the attitude of the authors awakens the urge to get on the side of the children who continue to be victimized by people who deem them weak, irresponsible, fallible, insignificant and ignorant. Despite the figures of studies, I would assume that parents *chose* to have their children and that loving them is a major part of the prospect[65]. I would assume that having children is not about do's and don'ts in essence, but about sound relationship – parents with God, with one another (where applicable) and with their children. Though I therefore firmly oppose their attitude towards children, Onyango-Ajus and Kiura's assertion that the "family remains the first school of Christian life" is a momentous one[66]. A great task awaits us, for that reason, to continue the identification and exposure of romanticized ideas of the family as we pursue moral transformation.

2.4 Redefining family

The first step in trying to rectify past errors and the present paradigm should be an attempt to truthfully review and revise our perceptions of the family. I wish in this section of the study to engage the voices of Sara Mvududu and Patricia McFadden –as their studies were specifically directed at the Southern African context –along with Don Browning and his colleagues who write from a religious perspective.

Mvududu and McFadden, authors of *Reconceptualizing the family in a changing Southern African environment*, did specific studies for the "Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust" and are highly critical of the family as a "nuclear, male constructed and dominated" unit (2001:12)[67]. They confirm that –along with this predominant form of the family –preconceived ideas of the family itself, as well as of the

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says, *"Hey... I thought we were a team?"* to which the boy replies, *"No, I thought you were the mother and I was the child...!"*

[65] The shocking results of a research study done in South Africa in 1999 showed that only 1% of parents had children due to a love relationship between them and only 7% of adults have kids, because they liked them (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:28).

[66] The authors' conviction is that the home should, first and foremost, be the place where children are given basic education in Christian living and faith (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:128).

[67] Mvududu and McFadden oppose the "conventional research methodology" to remove oneself from the research. Such removal, they hold, is a disempowerment as one needs to link ones thinking to reality (2001:15).

meaning of family, were at large responsible for the devastating effects that were experienced by family members. The problem with family has been the universalization of the human experience and the fact that the reality of diversity and plurality are ignored (2001:10). The irony in the matter is that the family is cooped in universality and an ignorance of diversity and plurality to simplify dealing with the family (2001:11)[68]. The private/public divide of the family is another problem for the family. Though they are located in a private arena, they are publicly defined. This problem often also ignores the fact that actual kinship for family members goes beyond the presumed blood-ties to include people that are part of one's lifestyle and with whom one spends a lot of time (2001:15).

Family forms in various societies are a reflection of specific historical, cultural, economical and political experiences of a given society. Family as an institution is thus a historical *process* and not a timeless entity. (2001:17). Modernity for one has had a radical impact on the conventional, patriarchal, heterosexual family. Despite the fact that the political importance of the family is often overlooked, families are also about alliances. At the same time the process of family formation and character are highly affected by economic-political powers. The fact that there are entire families living on the street is thus sadly ignored as society persists in thinking of family as a warm, safe and friendly place (2001:18). The ideal of family is furthermore chattered by exposure of the family to inequality and gender analysis in most families also to patriarchal violence and adultery.

Mvududu and McFadden have included a study of the various perspectives on family in various Southern African countries. In Botswana, blood is very important and the family is the location for material and emotional support, though neighbours and friends also perform the roles of relatives. The *lelapa* or whole clan is of importance in Lesotho. The family is therefore based on marriage. In Mozambique, family is the location for reproduction and reproducing values, whilst identity for the people of Swaziland is

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[68] I assume that finding a way to make it easier to deal with the family could be the reason behind trying to find a definition for "family" as was reflected in the reports of the faith communities.

centred in marriage and patriarchy (2001:41). In general, families in Southern African communities do not operate in isolation and encompass a movement of reciprocity, provision, sense of belonging, decision-making and rituals. The latter is owned by all members of the family as a source of stability and is central to the character and construction of the family (2001:12, 19).

Mvududu and McFadden make several suggestions concerning a reconceptualization of the family. The first is that there is no such thing as "the family" in the sense of one accepted model of family life. Instead, variety is the norm[69]. Moving away from problematic paradigms thus include acknowledgement of the contextual uniqueness, diversity and plurality of family (2001:11). In direct opposition to a universalization of the family, family is an ever-changing social institution with reality reflecting family as a multiplicity of identities and meaning for the ones involved. Restoring the family thus necessitates the acceptance of difference as a social reality. Mvududu and McFadden include examples of such realities: families established through women by choice whether through childbearing or adoption; families that are created through resistance; the reconstitution of family in predominant and heterosexual norms as well as families created by men.
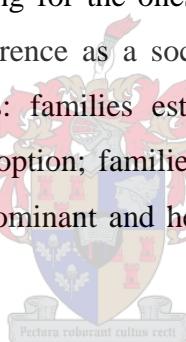
One of the most important challenges would be to promote finding the identity of family through socialization (i.e. relationships) and not through function. In contrast to the modern understanding and image of family, the family is *not* an amplification of individualism. Being family is not the segregation of a particular group of people who exclusively operate in comparable manner. Family is much rather a *communal* event. Since its foundation when a couple decides to enter into marriage, the process involves not only the two individuals, but also their immediate families, the extended families, ecclesial community and the people from society. Everyone joins in the celebration of the wedding day, the birth of the babies, birthdays and anniversaries through the years, promotions, achievements and funerals in the families (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura,

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[69] The authors is quoting from: Stuart, S. "Female-headed families:a comparative perspective of the Carribean and th developed world." *Gender and Devlopment. Vol. 4 no.2* Oxfam Design Department. June 1996.

2003:122)[70]. Kinship of family stretches further than blood-ties to relationship with people in a wide variety of circumstances and locations (Mvududu and McFadden, 2001:14). Family should thus be recognized within broader societal frames and not merely that of marriage and blood. Societal perception should therefore move away from "the mother-child nexus" as the core meaning of family –in other words, the notion of accepting family only as real once a child is born to the couple (2001:12).

Redefining the family is also the concern of Don Browning and his co-authors. In fact, they emphasize the renewal of the family as the most urgent and crucial task of society. They envision this new ideal for family to be an egalitarian one where the husband and wife[71] participate "relatively equally in paid work [as in] childcare and other domestic responsibilities." Browning proposes that this new family will need specific aid: new skills, new religious and communal supports and a new theory of authority" (1997:1). Browning and his partners refer to this new family ideal as "the committed, intact, equal-regard, public-private family". In short, this family is defined as one in which mother and father are parenting their own children –including adopted children and those through methods of assisted reproduction –in a lifetime marriage. It is one where the relationship between husband and wife is one of respect, affection, practical assistance and justice of equal seriousness and where husband and wife have privileges and responsibilities in both the public and private spheres of life.

The creation of this new "post-industrial, postmodern" family, Browning poses, is the responsibility of both the church – who has a theological mandate –and society (1997:2). They emphasize in particular the challenge to overcome power relations between husband, wife and children and the surrounding economic and governmental institutions. The process of critical analysis also includes a commitment of husband and wife to the reflection, communication and openness required for the transformation. Browning commendably acknowledges "the ecology of supports for families" and how these too

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[70] The editors included a whole chapter in their book -entitled "Family Festivals" -in which they highlight these celebrations as communal events and how to celebrate them meaningfully.

[71] Browning strongly argues for the importance of two-parent families that he upholds by critically testing and strengthening Biblical texts against other sources (2003:44).

need to be analysed and reconstructed –the extended family, church, civil society, government and market. More so, Browning accentuates a reciprocal relationship between the family and its environment. "[F]amilies themselves [are] to contribute to the common good" (1997:2). Critical familism, furthermore, includes a candid recognition of violence, addiction and exploitation which require intervention and, if need be, the dissolution of the family. Family reconstruction finally includes social support of single parents, stepparents, single persons and homosexual persons raising children (1997:3).

It seems that Mvududu and McFadden and Browning and his co-authors are pulling weights against each other on the reconceptualization of family. To the former party there can be no single accepted model of the family life. The approach to restoring family for them would be to accept the social reality of diversity and plurality pertaining also to the sexes of parties involved and whether there are children or not. Browning's party on the other hand, approaches the reconceptualization of the family with a resolute vision of the ideal family –one that bears a keen resemblance to the ideal of the more fundamentalist faith traditions as we have witnessed from the church reports earlier on. The two parties do, however, agree on the family being a social body and a communal event and strongly emphasize the importance of broader social networking and moral support. In additional concurrence, both parties recognize the private/public divide of the family as being problematic and necessitating attention.

Mvududu and McFadden, moreover, make valuable contributions for revision of family life by insightfully reflecting on the social realities of families and by emphasizing what family should *not* be. Families are not to be approached in a simplistic fashion. The reality of diversity and plurality are not to be ignored. Families are not to be "nuclear, male constructed and dominated" units and they are not timeless entities unaffected by the historical, cultural, economical and political experiences of the society in which they exist. Mvududu and McFadden, unfortunately, fall short of being more pragmatic.

Browning and his co-author do not deny the realities of different forms of family, but they insist that the reality of modern "patterns of family disruption, nonmarriage and

serial marriage" cannot be acceptable. Whilst Mvududu and McFadden superbly challenge us to face contextual realities, Browning and his co-authors take the challenge one step further. They insist on the explicit recognition and intervention of violence, abuse, addiction and exploitation in the family and dare even to suggest the possibility of dissolution of the family when all else fails. Though they admit that ideals can be perilous and moralistically devastating, they hold that ideals guide human flourishing (1997:272). Whilst they admit the irony of tension between positive vision and human frailty, such tension is sustained by a sense of forgiveness, grace and hope. "The purpose of an ideal is to point us beyond the immediacy of our concrete existence toward a vision for which we can hope" (1997:71).
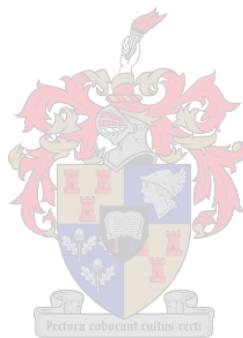
Chapter Three: Formation in and through the family

Koopman and Vosloo remind us that the heart of moral crisis is in fact an identity crisis and therefore in essence a human crisis (2002:17). This study has thus far revealed that a moral transformation of society is not about good people doing good things, but about human beings being formed into the form of Christ. This chapter is concerned with the practical implications of such a conclusion. How are local forms of identities –in which morality and civility can be sustained –constructed? (Alasdair MacIntyre in Koopman and Vosloo, 2002:58). Bonhoeffer has drawn our attention to the fact that living a moral life does not lie within human motives or abilities, but it is a mere response to what God has done in the world through the life and ministry of Jesus (2005:81). How then does one respond to Jesus taking on human form and how do we humans become truly human before God? (2005:94).

3.1 The process of formation

John Westerhoff[72] –in a section entitled, "The Catechetical Process" –made a survey on specific terms concerned with *catechesis,* "the process by which Christians are made" (1992:266). I have found his writings most valuable. I am, however, not very comfortable with his distinct expression of "Christians being made". Though I agree that being a Christian and all that it entails are not a natural, obvious process that can be taken for granted, I do want to sustain the tension with Jesus' teaching in John 3 concerning conversion or rather "being born again" also as something that comes by the Spirit of God. I prefer rather to speak of "the formation of Christ-like character" as a more inclusive understanding of refocusing on the life and person of Christ rather than leaning on the history and doctrine of Christianity. Skillen, for example, also warns against exclusivist thinking. He follows that Christians should not assume that they alone have been entrusted with the responsibility to enforce normative standard in life (1992:66).

In Westerhoff's survey *formation* is the first of three "intentional, interrelated lifelong processes essential to Christian faith and life". The second classification is *education* and

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[72] Westerhoff, J. 1992. "Fashioning Christians in Our Day" in Hauerwas, S. and Westerhoff, J. H. 1992. *Schooling Christians: "Holy experiments" in American education.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. pp. 65-87.

the third *instruction.* I will follow Westerhoff in his exploration of these means and view instruction and education first. *Instruction* is qualified as an aid to acquire knowledge and those abilities useful for responsible personal and communal Christian life in church and society. The knowledge of the contents of the Bible and the ability to understand and interpret its objectives is but one example of instruction. Knowing alone, however, will not ensure the life of discipleship[73]. *Education* is the aid for critical reflection on behaviour and experiences in the light of the gospel to discern whether a person is faithful or not and if not, what is needed to change such behaviour (1992:267)[74].

The final process is *formation* and as it is an extensive part of the focus of this research, I will elaborate on it in more detail as Westerhoff has done. He defines formation as the aid to acquire Christian faith (a particular perception of life and actual lives), Christian character (identity and behaviour) and Christian consciousness. Christian formation is thus the participation in and the practice of the Christian life of faith. This is done by identifying with a community, observing how persons in it live and imitating them (1992:267). Formation both conforms (through nurturing) and transforms (through conversion). Such formation, Westerhoff reasons, occurs through a process "best understood as apprenticeship" and can therefore also be defined as intentional enculturation[75] (1992:267). Westerhoff sets enculturation off against acculturation, which he poses as the process of learning to adapt to the general culture while still maintaining one's particular subculture[76]. Acculturation would thus be to function in a second culture without losing the fundamentals of one's primary culture (1992:269)[77].

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[73] The way Westerhoff puts it, knowledge of the content of Scripture can produce a person who knows all about Christianity, but who does not necessarily intend to become a Christian (1992:266).

[74] Glenn and Glenn differ somewhat from Westerhoff as they lean on the French distinction between instruction and education where instruction refers to the teaching of skills and information, whilst education refers to the formation of character and values, the development of the person. The authors emphasize that the two concepts embrace each other in practice (1992:90). Education, for Jean Bethke Elstain, is captured best by the classic word, *"Bildung"*, meaning "a coming into being, an education of the moral sensibilities and the creation of a self" (1992:55). It appears, nonetheless, that all the writers agree that education, instruction and formation are interrelated processes.

[75] Westerhoff understands enculturation as a natural process of formal and informal, intentional and unintentional means by which children are inducted into a community and acquire its culture (1992:269).

[76] Westerhoff defines culture as a people's learned and shared understandings and ways of life; the framework within which they perceive the world about them, interpret and react to events (1992:269). According to Westerhoff religion is the heart of culture and the idiom for dealing with whatever is most

Formation, according to Westerhoff, is foundational because it is the primary means by which Christians are "made" (1992:267) [78]. It was also the primary means by which Jesus taught (1992:270). Jesus is being presented as teacher without a classroom and travelling about to convey beliefs and ethical principles. The Greek word used to describe Jesus, *didaskalos,* is generally translated as "teacher", but it can also be translated as "to live with", "to accompany", or "to have [one's] life guided and shaped by life shared…"[79]. The formation of a Christ-like character thus involves the practice of living a particular way of life learning a multitude of skills through observation, imitation and practice (1992:271).

Westerhoff's exploration of formation indeed seems to be indispensable to Christian faith and life and subsequently to sustainable moral societies. I propose, however, that a practical implementation still necessitate an account for present realities as Mvududu and McFadden have challenged us with earlier in this study. Some of the issues to consider in addressing the practical realities of acquiring a Christ-perception of life observation, imitation and practice include for example the position of the government, the purpose of the family and parenting in particular. I address these factors of effect under pertinent headings in the pages to follow.
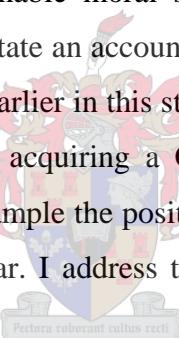
Church and state and the issue of schooling Christians
Who we are, what we believe, what we should know and how we should live become quite problematic with the diversity of views held by the many people in society and in this world (Glenn and Glenn, 1992:102). Not everyone agrees –not even Christians –on the detailed answers to these questions of life. Whilst the wars wage between religion and

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important and foundational. At the heart of religion are the perceptions that define its social construction of reality or its worldview and ethos (1992:269).

[77] The various understandings of these terms are an underscore of Westerhoff's understanding that they are interrelated as Glenn and Glenn's definition of education clearly shows. I thus remain with the exploration of Westerhoff with the emphasis on formation as it is sustained by the other concepts.

[78] I prefer to speak of "the formation of a Christ-like character" rather than "the making of Christians" as I have indicated with the commencement of Westerhoff's argument. The ideal – I believe –is is to become what we already are in Christ. The idea of "making Christians" leaves too much room for ambiguity and does not ring too well with the past testimony of Christianity.

[79] Westerhoff (1992:271) quotes Aaron Milavec from his book, *"To Empower As Jesus Did"*, 1982.

state schooling, children in particular are caught in-between (1992:102). The question Glenn and Glenn pose is to what extent the role of the state has contributed to the current crisis of family: Did the state expand their role because of the collapse of the family or did the family give way to the growing intervention of the state? (1992:89). This question can be directed to all spheres of life that have an influence on the family. It may even be asked to the Church: To what extend has the involvement of the Church weakened the ability of the family to perform its traditional responsibilities. If not actively contributing to its faintness, how does the Church do so passively? For centuries families have literally been spoiled by either one of these establishments. Whether it was the prince or the pope, decisions pertaining life issues were mostly made for the family. Today the battle between the state and religion continues with religious parents contesting liberal curricula[80]. Christian parents are adamant. They want Christianity back in schools, but they want more than just "vague traditions; if religious teaching is to be in the school at all, let it be explicit" (1992:105). The problem with such an attitude is that the parents indeed rely on the state to educate their children on religion[81].

The issue of schooling is especially sensitive as it contains much more than just logical fact. The whole of a person's being –feelings, faith, intuition and expectation –is involved in the process of seeking knowledge (Schwehn, 1992:36)[82]. To top it all off, schools are regarded as fundamental agents of enculturation (Westerhoff, 1992:266). These facts are particularly disturbing when one considers that children of age twelve would have spent more hours in school than they have spent with their families and with religious community combined. It would take seventy-five years of attending church and church school regularly to equal the school's influence in the first twelve formative years of a

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[80] Until now, I have wilfully restrained myself from making a distinction between parents and children as an active combat against patronizing children and underestimating their worth as full members of the family. My constraint was, moreover, to credit a variety of caregivers that does the actual parenting of children. This recognition excludes temporary situations like daycare centres- though it might apply depending on the hours the caregiver spent with the children in comparison with the parents. The recognition primarily apply where children are raised by relatives where parents practice prolonged absence for whichever reason. The present use of "parents" is an inclusive reference to the ones doing the actual parenting. The understanding here is that the adults do the guidance and the young ones the imitation.
[81] I have to wonder what example religious fundamentalists in general set for their children. Are they primarily motivated by doing right or being right? Whose "rights" are they fighting for in any case?
[82] Schwehn refers to the ideas of William James, "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence" in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 12 (1878).

person's life (Westerhoff, 1992:266). Glenn and Glenn, very optimistically, contest the experience of twelve years in the classroom to fifteen to twenty years of parenting and "the transmission of [their] deepest values to a beloved child" (1992:89).

Hauerwas shows specific interest in the matter of schooling Christians because he believes that liberalism has reached its moral limits and has ultimately resulted in moral relativism. In short, he defines schooling as "the manifold ways, in schools and out, in which Christians are made" (1992: vii). This –how Christians are made –is determined to a great extent by "*who is to do the teaching and what is to be taught* (1992: xi). The crisis arises with the decline or absence of character formation in modern schools and universities (Schwehn, 1992:52) and the apathy of Christians to contest morality in higher education (Hauerwas, 1992:vii). According to Hauerwas, Christians hardly take up the responsibility when it comes to schooling in fear of conflict with the dominant liberal ideas within their societies and therefore they restrain from even engaging in conversation about the schooling of their children (1992: vii). This apathy often stems from the fear to be labelled by their societies as being, amongst others, sectarian (Glenn and Glenn, 1992:97).
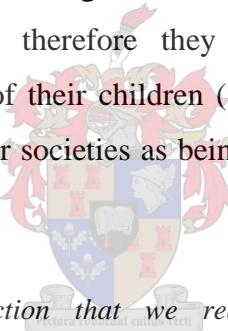
> *"…there is a growing conviction that we require a new understanding of society…distinctive, unique, identity-conscious communities interacting with each other in ways that do not compromise their integrity, but make possible various and diverse contributions to our common life. …Christian families need to be able to shape the convictions by which they are to live and by which they hope their children will live."* (Hauerwas, 1992: viii).

According to Schwehn, even the notorious philosopher, David Hume, had an intelligible understanding of the connection between spirituality and education. Hume understood very well that the Christian religion was not merely a set of teachings, but a way of life (1992:52). What is more, Parker Palmer[83] linked the idea of knowledge appears to the question of community (1992:30). Knowledge, according to Parker, is not "the result of isolated individual's efforts", but a reunion with love –and not logic –as primary bond

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[83] Palmer is the author of *"To Know As We Are Known"* 1983.

(1992:33). Knowledge and truth are communal terms connected to the subject of character. Schwehn exceeds Palmer in his belief that "genuine learning has always entailed the exercise of virtues –such as humility, faith and self-denial –that arose initially within communities that were self-consciously religious in character." (1992:49).

These arguments clearly show that schooling has no innocent affects. The teacher is not just a teacher. (S)he has her/his own moral beliefs by which (s)he produces and reproduces knowledge to her/his learners. The classroom is not just an empty space in which teachers and learners are occupied for a day or a season. Much is communicated through words, deeds and gestures. The learners are also not innocent recipients who come to class with the sole purpose of being educated. They exchange much more than academic words and writings. They can persuade, manipulate and intimidate as much as they can inspire and motivate. Christian parents ought, therefore, to steer away from a narrow-minded view on education and regard schooling indifferently.
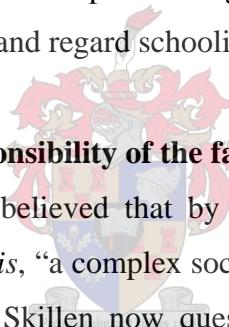
Religious education and the responsibility of the family

The great philosopher, Aristotle, believed that by definition the family –as does the individual man –belongs to the *polis*, "a complex society-ordering institution[84]. With this understanding even found today, Skillen now questions the responsibility of citizens concerning their education. "Is the *polis* a lover and trainer of children? If so, then why the need for families?" (1992:73)[85]. Skillen breaks down the analogies of Aristotle's *polis* as he first points out that "parenting is a virtue carried on in families [just as] teaching is a virtue carried on in schools" and secondly, that political life, family life, education and the rest find their meaning in something or someone much larger than political hierarchy. In turn, Glenn and Glenn answer this question by pointing out the fundamental rights of parents to form families and to determine the scope of their children's practical autonomy (1992:89).

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[84] This philosophy was taken up in many totalitarian regimes through the ages including that of the French Jacobins during the late 18th century claiming that "the child belongs to the state rather than to his or her family" (Glenn and Glenn, 1992:92).

[85] Skillen follows the exploration of the *polis* by Alasdair MacIntyre in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame:University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

Traditionally, education in most societies was strongly directed towards family life and boys and girls were specifically prepared to take up their future roles as husbands, wives and parents (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:15)[86]. As expected, these skills and trades were instructed in and around the house by older members of the family. In comparison to today, however, education is primarily understood as something constraint to the classroom (2003:15). Though this is the general understanding today, one can hardly expect to teach children the basic skills for life as they prepare to go to school. Children will need basic skills and values long before they prepare for school as by then they would have been introduced into social spheres outside the family set-up by then[87].

The place where children are given such basic education is therefore, primarily the family home (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:128). Onyango-Ajus and Kiura strongly advise parents to "train up their children themselves and not delegate too much to others, because they know their children better than anyone else" (2003:106). They also believe that single parents ought to "shoulder alone the task of disciplining, training and instructing" their children. The help of relatives and friends may be sought, however, in the case of a wilful child or rebellious teenager (2003:107)[88]. Not defying the merit of parents raising their own children, very few children are home from birth until they go to school due to the increasing demands of today. With working moms in competition for employment, children are entrusted to the care of relatives, day-care moms, pre-school educators and others from as early as being a few months old. Whether parents are able to raise their children themselves or not, the issue remains that there is a definite need for a positive approach in showing children the right path in life (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:29).

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[86] Onyango-Ajus and Kiura argue the case for African societies with special reference to the initiation programmes. I wish to propose that this trade was true for most traditional communities including western families.

[87] Most of the learning and growing of children occurs during the *first six years* of their lives (Marais and Marais, 2002:46).

[88] Onyango-Ajus and Kiura make a disturbing distinction concerning single parent families. They state, for example, that "The faith community [and] the parish should support single parents by providing education in such areas. The children too would benefit from special instruction" (2003:107). Such a statement may imply that single parents and their children are a solitary peculiar. They alone – and not the "standard" two-parent family – are in need of this *special instruction*.

The responsibilities and authorities of the family –especially with regard to the development of the character of children –cannot be substitute by supplementary teaching and training outside the home (Glenn and Glenn, 1992:88). Many would argue against such an expression on the grounds of the collapse of the family –as is often the case with educators and professionals in order to enhance their own services (1992:88). Though the fall of the family is often overemphasized in this regard, the decline cannot be denied either. It seems the crisis has yet another angle: To what extend can the family be trusted to shape the values and worldview of the children? (1992:93). To problematize matters even more, one could ask to what extend families are concerned about shaping the values and worldview of their children. Do Christian parents care about the effect of modern schools when it comes to the moral formation of their children at all? Hauerwas seem to think not as he emphasizes the apathy and fears of Christian parents when it comes to contesting moral teaching in schools (Hauerwas, 1992: vii).

Despite his critique of Christians as stated earlier, Hauerwas feels very strongly about the community's support to parents raising their children as worthy and valued citizens: "no question [ ] that the declaration [on religious freedom in America] is right to insist on parents' duty to educate their children in a manner that renders secondary these children's loyalty to the state… The family is said to be a 'society in its own' which means that parents have the right to determine the kind of [religious] education their children are to receive." (2000:113). Not only is the family the "the basic school of humanity" where children learn about life, but it is also the place where they learn about belief, faith and trust (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:87). Christian families are all the more accountable for the proper education and instruction of their children because of the commitment they made at the baptism of their children. "Matters of faith and religious instruction cannot be left to chance or until the child goes to church to prepare for first communion. Parents should find the time and make the effort to teach their children about God..." (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:106).

It is not to be assumed, however, that a child raised in "a family that believes in Christ and prays together will become a Christian" or that "the fruits of the Holy Spirit, love,

joy, peace, patience …will be evident in the home" (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:119). Knowledge of the content of Scripture can produce a person who knows all about Christianity, but who does not necessarily intend to become a Christian (Westerhoff, 1992:266). It is the responsibility, therefore, of parents to instruct their children in the ways of God, to explain and to apply them and to illustrate the power thereof in the way they as parents live. A sound family life is a significant constituent in God's desire for the nurture and growth of human beings to mature personhood (Barton, 1996:22). Raising children, therefore, becomes an act that confirms our belief that present and future life is in the hands of God.

Parenting: the issue of raising children

Raising children should never be mistaken for having children. This statement may well be received with an attitude that it is stating the obvious, but the reality of family and the affliction of children confirm the opposite. These realities generate anew the need for great concern regarding the issue of raising children.. Although no parent really prematurely knows what to expect with having and raising children, proper practical assessment could make a vast difference. Parents need to be conscious of the demands of raising children and the purpose of their family ought to guide them towards a specifically plan of that purpose concerning their children (Marais and Marais, 2002:8)[89]. As Westerhoff emphasized, raising children is an intentional, interrelated lifelong processes that requires life-long commitment from parents. It is a process to teach children responsibility, to give them the skills needed for decision-making, to enhance self-reliance and a positive self-esteem.

Parenting also involves the affirmation of the value of children, identifying their potential, believing in them and supporting them. All of these reassuring actions can make the difference between a testimony of success and a story of a lost life (Marais and Marais, 2002:79). One way of making children feel respected is for parents to really

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[89] Marais and Marais point out the challenge of raising children as a paradoxical event as parents prepare children for a future that they themselves know little about often with methods of the past that did not really work for them either (Marais and Marais, 2002:8). A friend of Marais is credited for triggering the question, "Do we raise children backward or forward?"

listen to children. Parents who involve children in decision-making create the space where they learn to negotiate (Marais and Marais, 2002:83). It is, therefore, important that parents create appropriate spaces for children "to take and practice responsibility, even if at the beginning they make mistakes (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:106). It is natural for parents to want to protect their children from getting hurt or experiencing failure. However, parents who prevent children from exploring and taking risks disregard the crucial experience and important life skills children learn in making mistakes.

Above all, raising children is also a communal event. The ancient saying, "It takes a village to raise a child"[90] captures the idea that parenting is actually not done by the parents alone. Parents receive help –whether knowingly or not –through the aid and moral support of relatives, neighbours and whoever they trust to influence their children positively. Frederick Marais relates how they were part of a family group who decided to join forces in raising their children together (Marais and Marais, 2002:52). For one –they created new communal rituals together. Secondly, they wilfully established friendships with people outside of the immediate family. Raising children is therefore not only a parental responsibility, but non-parents also bear social responsibility for the welfare of children (Iris Young in Browning, 1997:166). Despite the parenting responsibility and sacrificial elements, raising children is, however, also potentially enriching and life-enhancing to all the parties involved (Christine E. Gudorf in Browning, 1997:178).

Discipline or discipleship?

Appreciating the appeal for formation in the family does not mean that there is no room for discipline. Parents need to plan and apply mechanisms to assist them in their instruction. If there are no definite devices to guide parents and children through life, children will be forced to find their own way of coping and making sense of what is happening in their lives. What is more, children learn the global rhythms much faster – and, I should add, at an increasingly younger age (Marais and Marais, 2002:51). It is thus

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[90] Marais and Marais denote the saying as a Chinese proverb though the tradition is held of an African one. The proverb are making modern headlines due to the best-selling book by senator, Hillary Rodham Clinton. The book, *It takes a village,* testifies to the wealth of children and bringing them up and a cry to the nation to improve the raising of children.

vital for parents to decide on the mechanisms to be used in the family as the realities of life happen to children with or without support and guidance of the parents. The aspect of discipline, however, needs further exploration as there has been much confusion concerning the perception of discipline.

The first inclination at the sound of the word is the conventional correction and punishment by authority figures to minors as a means to enforce submission[91]. The mistake authority figures often make is to re-enforce the structure they grew up with, with the philosophy that "if it worked for me, it has to work for them". Parents will often admit that their own discipline was not always perfect, but that it worked as they themselves "turned out just fine" (Marais, 2002:73). In line with this thinking Onyango-Ajus and Kiura believe that *"Children must accept the routines and rules of their home. Parents get very upset when children disregard what they have established as family traditions."* (2003:116). The authors, first of all, make an obvious distinction between the roles of parents and children consistent with patriarchal hierarchy where parents are the ruling party and children are merely subordinates who are expected to follow their demands and commands in obedience. Onyango-Ajus and Kiura also differentiate between the qualities of family members and settled on the position that children are taken into the "established" homes of their parents and that they are merely to subordinately obey the rules of the house. According to this stance, children are portrayed as aliens the parents have to put up with, rather than being welcomed and respected as full members of the household[92].

To the contrary of the above stance, the conviction of the researcher is that the idea of discipline should much rather be linked to that of discipleship. The difference between

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[91] In the South African Afrikaans culture the Afrikaans idiom, *"Buig die boompie, terwyl hy nog jonk is"* [freely translated as "Bend the bough while it is still young"] is often abused as justification for fierce disciplinary measures like corporal punishment.

[92] My intention is not to advocate liberation and democracy –least of all as it is understood today with it being all rights and no responsibility. I want to emphasize, however, that the family house needs to be home for all its members and not a dictation for some and submission for others. The wise saying of Khalil Gibran –also qouted by Marais and Marais (2002:67) –is an old, but often neglected one: *"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life... They come... not from you, and.. they belong not to you..."*. Parenting is thus not a right, but a divine priviledge and wonderful responsibility.

discipleship and the general understanding of discipline, for one, is the difference between proactive teaching and mending instruction. The latter is in any case nothing more than substantiation that the parent had failed in his/her instruction in the first place. The challenge is to bring correction closer to the teaching style of Jesus and the grace of the Triune God as both parents and children are likely to make mistakes on their joint journey of mystery and test. This new approach requires a new way of thinking about and applying discipline. Working towards the decline of corrective punishment, discipline should much rather be approached as compatible behaviour that is taught, practised and celebrated (Marais and Marais, 2002:78). This diverse approach would mark the life of a family who honours their purpose and practise specific virtues as discipline in order to become virtuous people.

Discipline is needed within the family for both parents and children to assist them in being the family they wish to be. Without discipline, there can be no values. It is needed as a mechanism to live out the agreed values. Discipline is the regulation of the practice of values into habits to the extent of them becoming a part of your manner of doing (Marais and Marais, 2002:86). There has to be a clear method and motive of the operation of discipline in the family. Discipline within the family ought to make it easier for members to know and understand their roles and positions in the family. It ought to help the family to organize their being together better and to keep the children from being confused and insecure about who they are and what is expected of them.

It is important thus for a family to determine at the outset what family they want to be and then to decide on the values and rules to reach that goal (Marais and Marais, 2002:78). For example, parents should practice and consider the discipline in setting meal- and bedtimes even before the birth or adoption of children (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:105). As these disciplines are being fixed within the household, it is the responsibility of the parents to help the children to first understand the family values in order to live by them (2002:78). Values and reputable conduct can only be effectively put into practice when the family has clearly resolved their purpose. Values and discipline can only begin as formation where people have reached compatible understanding and

believe in one another (2002:80). The reversal of this statement is also true. Raising children can become perilous when parents are not consistent in their conduct. In the case of a two-parent family, both parents need to be present when instructing the children in values as parenting becomes difficult and ineffective when parents do not support one another. (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:106).

Formation as parental modelling

The best method of fostering children is for parents to set the godly example as children most often than not adopt the faith and values that are modelled to them primarily by their parents. Parents who live contrary to the teaching of Christ and who fail to teach children in the Christian way, leaves a void in children's lives soon to be filled by other forces –often to negative effect (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:131). The beliefs and attitude of life ought therefore to be secured in a most positive way. This can only be the case when parents take their task of commitment to raising their children according to the will of God seriously.
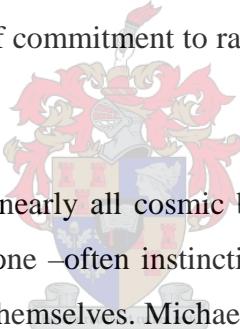
The most effective way in which nearly all cosmic beings –both people and animals – learn, is by observation. This is done –often instinctively –by attentively watching how others do and then set out to try it themselves. Michael Warren ("Imitating Jesus in a time of Imitation", 1992:241) writes: "I have always known that young children are busy copying behaviour as their major life work at that age …Finally I came to see that the drive for imitation is a central but underestimated character of all human life. In religious traditions such as the Jewish and Christian traditions, imitation is a prime value, with the imitation being of God…". Children are no exception. They learn by observation more than they do by listening to the advice of parents (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:106). They do as they see others do and –most often than not –they mime what they see practiced at home first.

Frederick Marais (2002:86) challenges therefore the example set by especially parents to children by asking the very critical question: *Who will they watch?* This question poses the key to understanding the dilemma of moral formation today. Humankind is designed

to start out as dependent beings that gradually develop through different stages of life. From the beginning, they depend on adults to nurture them within these stages until they are able to live fairly independent lives themselves. The question remains: Where are these grown-ups to be found? Who is responsible to foster these infants and who decides what is best for them?

According to Bonhoeffer, authorization of ethical discourse is granted to the parent and not the child, to the teacher and not the student, the old person and not the young (2005:372). Children are most impressed by the example they witness from their parents and parents will soon learn that the intelligence of children should not be underestimated. Children are either educated by the good example of proper values, loving, correcting and guidance towards a practical faith in God or by bad examples of neglect, abuse and selfish behaviour. Children have an intuitive sense for sincerity and will not be fooled by the demand, "Do as I say!", when the words of the parents are not matched by their actions. Children will instantly know the validity of a parent's claims. This is particularly true for Christian parents aspiring to raise godly children. Their task as parents will be much easier when they show their children that their own lives are centred on God (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:119). Children, however, are also susceptible to the influence of cultures outside the family and much of this influence comes through their friends (2003:116). In this regard I want to propose, however, that peer pressure is less effective where a good foundation was laid by the parents in training children in decision-making, responsibility, respect for others, discernment and being able to say 'no' at valid occasions from a very young age[93].

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[93] Marais and Marais relate the initiative of a single dad who planned a year of adventure to guide his son into adulthood (2002:52). Most of the journey entailed the son's exposure to different aspects of culture such as ballet and going to a fine restaurant where the son witnessed the sense of sobriety. At a time when they encountered potential danger, the son learned from his dad how to handle the situation. With the fun the had, came also the sense of responsibility. The dad, furthermore, made the important discovery of his own growth. After the year the relationship between son and dad was redefined to new friendship, reciprocal respect and mutual appreciation. This experience by the father and son supplies us with a healthy example for parents to plan for their children and to guide them into maturity. The means lie not essentially in what is done, but in how the planning and practice is done. These precious times of bonding and mentoring edify the importance and the how of decision-making, planning, conflict management and various other skills that are needed to live a respectable life in the bigger society.

Marais and Marais suggest that the new paradigm needed for family is that of purpose to life (2002:47). To them the key lies in the question of what God is busy doing (2002:48). It is thus God's purpose that determines the programme and priorities for the family. Knowing God's purpose will direct the family in knowing who they are, where they are heading and how to get there. Such direction becomes a question of finding the proper in force lifestyle for the family[94].

3.2 Family and rituals

Within the formation and construction of family rituals plays a vital role. This section of the chapter examines how family practices support the family in its being and doing with special regard to nurturing and growth. Various rituals celebrated within the social and ecclesial life will be explored in how they function as a moral midwife to support the family in its moral vocation. Alta and Frederick Marais dedicated a whole chapter in their book[95] where they share the insightfulness of rituals within the family. The same method was followed by Onyango-Ajus and Kiura and therefore also their exploration of the family and the significance of rituals will be examined here.

Alta and Frederick Marais refer to rituals as "rhythms" and emphasize the value thereof as it aids the family in being family. Rhythms aid families to establish and secure a lifestyle. The repetition of rhythms is especially appreciated for the "spaces they create in which to learn and to grow". Everything else in the nurturing of children is built on this foundation (Marais, 2002:46)[96]. It is especially in doing things together –for example the family rituals of eating, working and playing together –that culture is born. Specific rituals or rhythms in a family also assist the family in handling the paradoxes of life – whether it is position or function, birth or death, joy or tragedy.

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[94] Too much of our human experience of life is what happens *to* us and not through us.

[95] Chapter 4 is titled *"Familie is om in pas te kom met mekaar"* which can be translated as 'Family is to be in step with one another".

[96] Frederick Marais refers to the phase that immediately follows on this first step of learning and growing as the phase of *"verbreding"* or expansion. He also relates a personal story as an example of how the disturbance of this rhythm can have a life-long influence on family life and family members (2002:43).

Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, in turn, focus on "events" or festivals being celebrated by the family as traditions to be past on from one generation to another (2003:122). The celebrations not only serve the bonding and building of the family, but also function as a witness of the Christian family to the bigger community. They feature especially prayer, sacraments and being part of a Church community as the "spiritual strengths of a family" (2003:9). Rituals –whether performed at church or at home –are done in communion with fellow believers, family and friends. Celebrating events as a family install the Christian narrative that is the foundation of Christian morals within children and affirm them in the adult life. It is thus a very practical and natural way of passing on the faith to children (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:127). What is more, the observance of family rituals and the value thereof as occasions of faith will be cherished long after the children are grown-up and become parents themselves.

Ecclesial participation

The general idea is that children dislike church. They hate getting up early on a Sunday, putting on tight and stuffy clothes and they detest having to sit still and quietly on a very uncomfortable pew listening to the long and dreary bleat of an old minister. I want to propose the contrary, namely, that children would love to go to church once they observe the pleasure and meaning their own parents find in it as well as the resonance thereof within the communion of the ecclesial body[97]. In such instance, it makes sense to children to get up on a Sunday morning and prepare with the family to join the weekly service.

Parents' approach towards church and church attendance has a major impact on the attitude of their children. My experience is that children dread going to church particularly when their parents show no interest in attending the services themselves. There are several actions parents can take to avoid their children from growing resentment towards the church. One example is for parents to organize the family routine in such a way that everyone is prepared to get up early on Sundays and attend the service together as a family (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:127). I want to believe, as these

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[97] This may be especially true even for the minister's children.

authors do, that children who are brought up in this routine will show more appreciation and dedication for the communal life when they reach independence (2003:128).

Events

Onyango-Ajus and Kiura include the whole range of family festivals and ecclesial celebrations like the birth of a baby, birthdays in the family, wedding anniversaries, Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week and Easter under this heading. I especially appreciate their suggestion of celebrating anniversaries as it is a neglected occasion in many families. The authors propose that at the event of celebration parents explain to the children what they are celebrating (2003:124). Not only are children taught to appreciate the Christian marriage, but the exercise serves as a reminder to the parents to renew their love and appreciation for one another. The celebration may also serve as an opportunity for parents and children to share with one another about their respective experiences of the marriage in the home. The celebration of an anniversary, furthermore, serves as an occasion for the couple and all present to thank God for His faithfulness in their lives as well as an opportunity to pray for the marriages of family members and congregants.
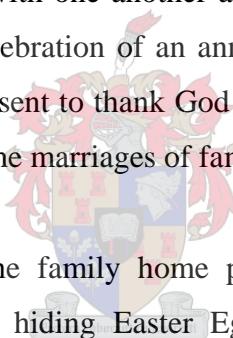
Celebrating church festivals at the family home preferably includes more than just trimming the Christmas tree and hiding Easter Eggs for the children. All ecclesial festivals should be included as part of the family rituals. Celebrating also Advent, Lent and the Holy Week at home provides the opportunity to parents to pass on the Christian faith to their children and bringing them into deeper knowledge of their Saviour (2003:125). This requires commitment from parents and guardians and grants the chance for them to sharpen their own knowledge on Christian doctrine.

Family worship

Bringing the gospel home –in both the metaphorical and the literal sense of the word –is another ceremonial convention that requires special planning and commitment from the family. This time of family worship should be set when all members of the family can be present (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:120). For most families the best time corresponds to that of the family meal, that is, either before or at breakfast or during or

after supper. What is most important is that these times call for routine and consistency enabling children in particular to easily follow the practice and take occasional turns in leading it (2003:120). The purpose of family worship should not fall into empty ritual, but be relevant to the family in their everyday life. Parents can –for example – direct prayers to issues such as children's examination or sickly members of the family, extended family or of the community (2003:120).

Prayer

Prayer was a big part of the new community initiated by Frederick Marais, his family and friends to raise their children together (2002:52). The practice of prayer was a time of listening first to the needs and problems of one another. This then was followed by prayer with the given person(s) for their specific needs and problems. It was a time of growing together and learning to reach out to others. Frederick testifies to the impact it has had on his children. It helped them to connect with great ease to other people –even to grown-ups. It also taught them that relationship as a being with other people exceeds by far the secluded world that is created by watching television and playing video and computer games (Marais and Marais, 2002:52).
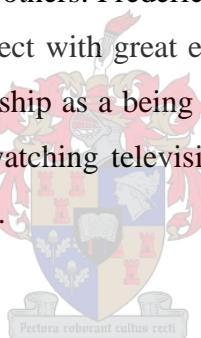
Sacraments

Parents play a vital role in preparing children for sacraments that they can do during family worship the evening before. Children can do the related Scripture reading, be invited into discussion on specific topics and asked to reflect on their understanding of the sacraments (2003:128).

Baptism: "…the Church offers an alternative to family because through our baptism we understand that we have been made part of one another in a more determinative way then biology can ever do." (Hauerwas, 2000:183). Through the baptism, Christians are adopted children of God and called to follow Christ in faith (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:118). This sacrament also endorses family and the raising of children as communal entities as the congregation act as witnesses –and therefore also as guardians –of the sacramental vows.

Eucharist: Sharing the Eucharist together is a strong proclamation of the Christian community that Jesus gathers people together as friends (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:34). Children learn about the values of forgiveness and reconciliation as they witness and participate in this sacramental embrace.

Scripture reading

From Scripture we learn God's narrative; who He is and how He has acted through history. That and the reaction of Biblical characters serve as the basis for values in the Christian family. Incorporating Scripture reading in the daily activities of the family develops into the pattern of being familiarized with the text and memorized verses serve as a conscience for the family to uphold their values (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:47).

Time

One on one time with children is a beneficial investment for the family that is hideously neglected. Parents should create special opportunities for meaningful dialogue with each child apart from interaction in the ordinary course of the day. This ritual nurtures respect, love, appreciation and self-confidence in children (2003:108). Same-sex quality time is of equal importance and parents should arrange for their children to regularly spent time with a parent or fostering adult of the same sex.

3.3 Formation through the family

Browning has rightfully remarked that the family is not a passive reality, but one that shapes its environment as much as it is shaped by it (1997:5). Although the reflection on the social realities of families has revealed that this relationship has hardly been a positive symbiosis until now, Christian communities and families in particular has a new challenge of being formed into the form of Christ and to embrace the world as God did in Christ in a new mode.

I wish to highlight examples of how this embracement has been done from this paper: In the African Methodist Episcopal tradition moral formation through the Christian family

has been embodied through a prophetic ministry, namely through the participatory action of Christian communities and families against injustice (Airheart and Lambert Bendroth, 1996:77). Christian communities and families also acted as supportive extended families during the Civil Rights movement in the USA during the 1950's and 1960's. The same witness is true for local AME communities, but also for various other faith communities in South Africa during the years of Apartheid and the years of its resistance. Christian communities participated in the struggle against political, economical and social systems of injustice because of their convictions based on the revelation of God in Christ. For members of the United Methodist church the call was more particularly to spread the love from their family to their communities by taking a stand on social issues (Airheart and Lambert Bendroth, 1996:94).

The moral formation through families is also evident from the example set by early Christian families. Families that had the revelation of God's salvation through Christ have opened their homes to the extended Christian family as a gathering place for prayers, meals, instruction and to accommodate travelling apostles like Paul (Trümper in Balch and Osiek, 2003:19). Family homes played key role in the spreading of Christianity, evangelization and religious education and early Christianity emerged as "one of the most egalitarian family movements" of its time. The intention of the reform of early Christian family was exactly aimed at fracturing the family patterns of the Greco-Roman world (Browning, 2003:43).

Christian families who have accepted the unity of baptism is challenged to share the witness of regarding others as equal (Lampe in Balch and Osiek, 223:77). Through the extended family system, Christian families are offered the opportunities for practicing the Gospel's message of love. Children, for example, experience a life of sharing and learning from other people (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:57). The practice of extended family in itself reflects the life of the Holy Trinity, which is one of love and sharing (2003:58).

Parents who take seriously their task of commitment to raising their children according to the will of God simultaneously serve as a sign of God's hope and grace to other family members and their community. Society, today, is in dire need of the evidence of an alternative lifestyle. People –especially those that do not consider themselves to be religious –want to see that what Christians confess is liable and effective. Being able to live up to their confession not only serves as a testimony to others, but it is a confirmation to others that Christians truly believe in what they confess. This is especially a challenge for Christian parents, because they are the ones –more than others –whose success as parents are measured "by the way their children turn out" (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:131).

McFadden and Mvududu aided us in recognizing anew that family is a communal event and that kinship of family stretches further than blood-ties to relationship with people in a wide variety of circumstances and locations (2001:14). These networks of relationships operate as powerful channels for moral formation and social transformation. It is as Christians who have our being, meaning and direction in and through the Triune God (Acts17:28), that we influence our relatives and those socializing with us (Onyango-Ajus and Kiura, 2003:64). It is our actual lives as Christians –how we act and react, how we spend our time, money and energy –that witness of God's will in Christ and that influence the lives of people around us. It is in our everyday lifestyles that Christians' understanding of their mission and ministry as God's people are disclosed and whereby surrounding life is influenced and transformed back to the image of God.

Within the ministry of hospitality to neighbours and strangers, Christian families have the divine opportunity to also invite their guests to participate in their family rituals. These rituals of social and ecclesial celebrations, thus, not only serve the bonding and building of the family itself, but within the unique and holy intimacy of the Christian family they function also as a witness of God's character to and his intention for the society at large. Through observing the practices of the Christian family and within the participation in the Christian life of faith, Christian formation through God's Spirit commence also in the lives of those who, until then, did not really know God (Westerhoff, 1992:267).

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Humanity is in anguish owing to the many challenges facing societies around the globe today, but especially also in our country, South Africa. The extent of the concurrent and interconnected realities such as poverty, lack of shelter, food and education, unemployment, crime, corruption, murder, rape, HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancies and abortions –to name but a few socio-economical manifestations –continues to generate societies with a sea of broken lives who, in various ways, cry out for help. Although people and governments are deeply distressed by the extent of these and how it affects human lives in particular, the majority of people feels overwhelmed and is unsure how to approach the dilemma we are faced with.

The human crisis of our local societies has become a personal concern and, consequently, this intense concern for social transformation served as the motivation for this research paper. Although I am convinced that there are numerous ways to approach the phenomena of the present global socio-economical and political atrocities, my experience has made me realize that human lives are at stake. This insight has led me, therefore, to explore the route to an alternative life through the window of family life. The constant witnessing of broken lives within equally skewed societies challenged me to explore the correlation between the moral decline of society and moral formation within the hub of society, namely the human family. Is it possible, I asked myself , to have a variation on the form and function of society by addressing the dynamics of identity and community?

The expedition of my search called for an introspection of the socio-cultural motivation of local societies –of which their predominant members claim to be of the Christian faith. The study is, therefore, a re-examination of the theological foundation of the moral precepts of the Christian existence, as well as how it ought to be linked to social transformation. The study, consecutively, explored the denotation of morality and ethics, family life and the sociological formation of a people. The assumption, in other words, was that changing a society means changing a people. Changing a people in turn means changing the operation of the centre of humanity, namely addressing the efficiency of the formational foundation found within the family home.

The first section of the assignment established that –as Christians living in South African societies –our social responsibility, namely "what we do" are integrally linked to our Christian identity, namely "who we are". As Christians, living in local societies, we are called by God to participate with him in a social recreation according to his divine will. The study has revealed that the exploration of the dynamics of worldly occupation and spiritual identity and its interconnectedness is neither new nor simplistic. In general, however, morality and ethics pertain to the character, custom and conduct of people within a community –in other words, it is the character and behaviour of people relating to other people within a given society. Ethics, therefore, cannot be reduced to rules and norms, but entail the kind of people we want to be in relationship with others.

The challenge of deciding which norms to follow becomes a major impediment in attaining a peaceful society. Stanley Hauerwas and his co-authors insist that human beings are bound by the normative standards of the Creator-Redeemer God and not by the subjective projections of a single group of society. As human beings, we find the will of God captured within the narrative of Jesus Christ. Within the story of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, we find the set of beliefs from which to derive moral values and appropriate engagement of the world. Christians contribute to the wellbeing of the world by following such conviction with a modest and self-critical attitude as they humbly continue to wrestle with the mystery of God themselves. Koopman and Vosloo emphasize, therefore that morality is about a relationship with God where we are oriented towards the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

As Christians living in this world, we engage in it not through our own strengths, but merely respond through our actions to God's creative and redemptive initiative. Like Jesus, we are called to become real people who are able to share in the suffering of others. The call to make the reality of Jesus Christ present in the world is only possible through the process of transformation where we are drawn into the form of Christ by God's Spirit. Christian ethics is, therefore, also a contextual issue that is unique in time and place as various people from various contexts have different experiences and realities. The challenge of living an alternative life according to the example of Christ is

as demanding as ever –living in a "runaway world" of rapid change, technology, globalization, capitalization and various other modern and post-modern trends that contribute to the increasing demands and consequential fragmentation of familial and societal life.

Our present Christian conduct is, furthermore, embedded within a bigger storied society. In this regard, Scripture acts as a moral aid to remind us of the stories of God for the continual guidance of our communal life. Scriptural narratives of Old and New Testament communities from various concrete socio-historical contexts provide us with examples on how to remember the stories that constitute our identity as community of the covenant-keeping God and his purposes for his entire creation.

The next phase of the research was a concern for the actual sustenance of local forms of moral identities. Exactly where and how are the moral convictions and characters of Christians inspired and nurtured? Though both Bonhoeffer and Hauerwas insist on the church having the mandate for moral formation, both theologians admit that the visible church has thus far failed in truthfully claiming such right of responsibility. The exploration of various faith traditions has confirmed that the ecclesial setting in itself is often subjectively predisposed to family structuring and is, therefore, unable to fully comprehend and address the dynamics of family life. The search, thus, led to a closer examination of the family as the basic unit of society.

The study showed that the traditional perception of who the family is suppose to be and what it is suppose to do, is a persistent one that is difficult to conquer. For most, the belief is maintained that the family is little more than a natural process of procreation conducted by the traditional patriarchal system where the parents –and more so the father figure –is the autocratic ruling figure and the children are subordinate followers. The study, however, revealed that the paradigm concerning family needs to shift from one of principal functionality to one that is primarily relationship orientated; from perceiving family as an automatic and self-sufficient entity to one that requires commitment, planning and active, sacrificial participation. Stereotypical perceptions especially need to

be broken down with regard to the powerful influence of faith tradition on the family itself, as well as on the society. Most importantly, the single-minded view that family is a two-parented and nuclear ideal needs to be rooted out. Family, in especially the changing Southern African society, is much more diverse and extended. In attempt to restore the family to the divine vision, Browning and his co-authors, call for an explicit recognition and intervention of the realities that threatens the family life. These threats include divorce, domestic violence, neglect, the paradigm of children, modernization, globalization, and individualism. A reconstruction of family includes also the recognition and encouragement of a network of social support.

The last chapter of this paper explored the concern for the practical implications of the how human beings are formed into the form of Christ. The study significantly confirmed the family as primary school for formation especially regarding a proactive construction towards an alternative society of the present reality of brokenness and distortion. The efficiency of the formational process rest on the assumption that the family is Christian and are highly committed to their relationship with God and their calling to participate in God's mission of transformation. It is important to note that such an assumption is not motivated by a romanticized perception of the family, but that the assumption is based on the conviction of a positive vision of hope as suggested by Browning and his co-authors (1997:71). The vision of the ideal family also does not deny or exclude the presence of challenging realities, but it is sustained by a sense of forgiveness, grace and hope.

The process of formation is strongly linked to the process of instruction by which Jesus guided his followers. The process that is essential to Christian faith and life is on the one hand an intentional process and on the other, an interrelated process that proceeds for the duration of the individual and communal life. The formation foundation is laid within the first six years of the human life. During this period of time, children spent almost all of their time by attentively observing the conduct of especially their parents and consciously and subconsciously begin to imitate them. Children, therefore, begin to imitate and internalize the particular perception of life and lives, identity and behaviour and religious consciousness of their parents.

Parents are the primary educators of their children –not the church and not the public school teacher. This is especially true as instruction is not a clinical exercise, but one that is deeply connected to spirituality. The moral conviction of the teacher integrally accompanies the instruction. Parents, therefore, have a definite responsibility to instruct and to guide their children as Jesus did his disciples. Once again, the assumption is that the parents love their children and are committed to their holistic wellbeing. Throughout the process of formation, discipline –such as meal-times and sleeping hours within the household –becomes an essential mechanism concerning effective functionality of the family. Other than in the past, correction comes not by means of corporal punishment, but by leaning primarily on the discipleship model of Jesus where a particular lifestyle in response to the desires of God is being practised.

Raising children as an act that confirms our belief that present and future life is in the hands of God, entails also an enrichment of the parental life. Family rituals play a vital role concerning the affirmation of identity, moral formation and pastoral care of the family and participation should be encouraged both at home and within the ecclesial body. The organism of the family becomes an important vehicle for social transformation as the family actively participate in God's process. The family –for example –becomes an agent of change as it channels the grace of God through hospitality and inviting others to join them in celebrating rituals that affirms Christian identity and moral values.

The conclusion of this study is hence that the human crisis of society is in fact a cyclical dynamic of morality and identity. The story of Christ as the definite intervention of the eternal God in the history of humankind provides us with the conviction of hope for a moral transformation. The transformation of society is, therefore, nothing other than the transformation of a people who are in relationship with the Creator-Redeemer God. The redemptive and recreational work of the Triune God manifests simultaneously as a transformation of the operation of the centre of humanity, namely a revival of the efficiency of the formational foundation found within the family home. The Christian

family that avails itself to God's grace avails itself to serves as a reputable model of virtuous living for society.

What is more –the moral formation of individuals and communities is a joint endeavour between the church and the family. On the one hand, God works transformation within the created space where God's Word is read and proclaimed, where Christ is seen and heard anew and where –by the celebration of ecclesial rituals –our identity as God's people are confirmed. Family, on the other hand, becomes a vocation for the up-building of a particular kind of community as children are received and nurtured by godly parents within a environment of love, embrace and security (Hauerwas, 1981:174). Kingdom values that resonate in human acts of love, obedience, hospitality, forgiveness and sacrifice can only have meaning as they are shaped and formed within relationships and structures (Barton, 1996:23). Within the task and calling of human beings to respond to the creation and sustenance and the salvation and recreation of the Triune God, it becomes evident that the human family has a vital role to play (Barton, 1996:22).

Addressing the social crisis of a South African community should not be seen as an antagonistic perplexity of whether to address the causes and manifestations of socio-economic and political matters like poverty and HIV and AIDS or the profound effects that these matters have on the human life. The process of restoration of our local societies is much rather a dual action from within the nucleus of society, namely through the transformation of the family and the moral formation of its members, but also from without as God works –for example through the intervention of already transformed bodies. The challenge to Christians in South Africa is to appreciate and cherish the family that we presently have and to at least morally adopt the extended social family of which we are presently part of. Whether we want to admit it or not, the family's problem is our problem as the benefit of the family is ours too. This challenge is even more important concerning the many AIDS orphans in our own country and in neighbouring countries.

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