

Marriage Bill 2021: Let's go for it



JACOB NTUNTU

THE Marriage Bill, 2021 is currently on the floor of Zambia's National Assembly going through the process of becoming law.

In a memorandum signed by Attorney General, Likando Kalaluka, the bill has the objective to consolidate the law relating to marriage, divorce and maintenance, it also provides for the registration of civil, religious and customary marriages.

The bill also seeks to repeal the old and obsolete marriage laws such as the Marriage Act of 1918 and the Deceased Beother's Widow's Marriage Act of 1926.

The bill also attempts to repeal the Matrimonial Causes Act of 2007.

Of great interest to the Church in this bill is Part V which provides for the registration of Five Types of Marriages including the Civil Marriage, the Christian Marriage, the Hindu Marriage, the Islamic Marriage and the

Customary Marriage.

By providing for the Islamic Marriage and the Customary Marriage, the Bill practically legalises polygamy provided it is registered under the Islamic Religion or the African Traditional Customs.

The Bill makes it clear on this when it states that the Islamic and the Customary Marriages are polygamous or potentially polygamous.

Meaning that even when one is in a monogamous marriage under Islam or under the Traditional Culture, that marriage has the potential to become polygamous.

Nevertheless, the Bill provides that a marriage can

of Zambia as a Christian Nation as an aspiration to do everything based on the teachings of the Christian faith.

The legalisation of polygamy will definitely get to the nerves of Christians, especially the evangelical conservatives, who cannot take it that an Islamic Marriage and a Customary Marriage are legislated for in a Christian Nation.

However, the bill acknowledges the existence of other religions and cultures in Zambia and seeks to legislate for the marriages conducted within those religious and cultural settings.

Indeed this must not bother us too much as Christians

marriages, and may never be forced to conduct a civil marriage that goes against his religious convictions. This applies to marriage officers within the Islamic and Hindu set up.

The marriage age is restricted to 18 years and above for all marriages, effectively addressing the problem of early marriages the nation has been struggling with over the years.

The Marriage Bill, 2021 clearly defines marriage as between a man and woman and strongly prohibits same sex marriages and other forms of marriages of a deprived nature.

It provides for ceremonising a civil marriage between 08:00 hrs and 18:00 hrs, and ceremonising a Christian Marriage between 06hrs and 18:00 hrs.

This bill provides for protection of the rights of women who are in customary marriages and shields them from abuse.

In my view the general aspiration of this Bill is good. It has also adequately provided for the protection of the rights of both the marriage officers and the couples on whom the marriage is ceremonised.

The act also consolidates the law in the efforts of avoiding early marriages and extends the protection of the rights of women to the customary set up.

In this case, I am of the view that the Marriage Act, 2021 is good and it must be supported by all Zambians.

God Bless Zambia

The author is a pastor.

The legalisation of polygamy will definitely get to the nerves of Christians, especially the evangelical conservatives, who cannot take it that an Islamic Marriage and a Customary Marriage are legislated for in a Christian Nation.

be converted from being potentially polygamous to being a monogamous marriage.

Conclusively, the bill practically legalises polygamy.

This may not go well with the Christian conservatives especially from the evangelical circles who interpret the declaration

because Zambia is a nation and not a church.

The bill also provides for the civil marriage. This is a monogamous marriage conducted within the law but outside of any religious or cultural influence.

Under this bill, the gazetted minister of the Gospel will be licensed to conduct Christian