

**TANGAZA COLLEGE  
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA**

**AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION:**

Reconciliation and Forgiveness  
As The Way Forward for the Reconstruction of Africa



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## Student's Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*AACC*: All Africa Conference of Churches

*AFJN*: Africa Faith Justice Network

*ANB*: Africa News Bulletin

*ATISCA*: Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa

*DRC*: Democratic Republic of Congo

*EA*: Ecclesia in Africa

*EAAAT*: Ecumenical Association of African Theologians

*EATWOT*: Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians

*ICTR*: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

*IDP*: Internally Displaced People

*IMF*: International Monetary Fund

*FECCLAHA*: Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches

in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa

*HIV*: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

*LRA*: Lord's Resistance Army

*NGO*: Non-Governmental Organisation

*SAP*: Structural Adjustment Programme

*SIA*: Salvation Islamic Army

*TCR*: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

*WCC*: World Council of Churches

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Africa is in crisis, and indeed in a deep crisis, which from the analysis of many, makes it a hopeless continent, ever degenerating and not capable of shaping its own future positively. We would have expected that with the age of technology, globalisation of the world economy and means of communication Africa would develop itself.<sup>1</sup> Instead while the world is becoming one global village Africa remains at the edge, if not swallowed by the village. Africa is more and more marginalised on the world's political and economic scene. Internally, there are a plethora of problems ranging from ethnic conflicts to gender based discrimination resulting in domestic violence. These conflicts include trans-border conflicts between African nations. The outcome of all this is the suffering of many, rendering it difficult to have any common meaningful project that can foster a better way of living together. Hence what is our attitude in front of this African situation?

This essay is an attempt to look at African Theology in the light of the current situation of crisis on the continent. While many may be discouraged, this paper is about hope, a hope that lies in the Reconstruction of the continent based on Reconciliation and Forgiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> On Globalisation read Laurenti Magesa "Africa's Struggle for Self-Definition During a Time of Globalisation" In: Sedos Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 8/9, August-September, 1999, pp. 235-239. It is an interesting article whereby Magesa analyses the impact of economic, political and cultural globalisation on Africa. He also discerns elements of globalisation and alienation in Christianity whereby African Christians are living their Christianity on a dual level. Africans imagine that they are living the reality of the official, Western Church, while in reality they are living on the reality of African Religion.

The first chapter describes the African situation. According to Ka Mana<sup>2</sup> we need to know what we have to reconstruct. He says that: "If we want to reconstruct our continent and build the future, we must first have a correct idea of what has been destroyed and which is manifested in the crisis that our people and countries go through today."<sup>3</sup> Though the analysis may be pessimistic, this chapter ends with a tone of hope. Hope is the source from which we draw our strength to undertake the project of rebuilding. It is difficult to undertake any endeavour without hope as a foundation. There has been other voices of hope, ours is only an emphasis.

The second chapter confronts the theological thinking of Africans within the African reality. We look at the different trends in African Christian Theology and their relevance to the African continent. While acknowledging the genius of the scholars, we have basically concluded that this theology remains a privilege of a few and has little impact on the lives of many Africans. African theologians have not been able to shape the African mind so that it can be the agent of its own development. African scholars have so much emphasised the role of the West in the destruction of Africa that they have lost a vision for this continent. Instead of focusing on the empowerment of Africans they exclusively focus on theological elaborations and discussions that blame the West for Africa's misfortunes. Also they are theorists, praxis is lacking.

The third chapter studies the Theology of Reconstruction, an emerging theology

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<sup>2</sup> Ka Mana is a Lutheran Theologian from The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He has written a number of books on Christology and on theology of reconstruction: Théologie Africaine Pour Temps de Crise (African Theology in Time of Crisis), Paris: Editions Karthala, 1993; L' Afrique va t-elle mourir? Essai d'Ethique Politique, (Will Africa Die? An Essay of Political Ethic) Paris: Karthala, 1994; Christ d' Afrique (Christ of Africa), Paris: Editions Karthala, 1994

<sup>3</sup> "Si nous voulons reconstruire notre continent et bâtir son avenir avec bonheur, nous devons préalablement avoir une idée juste de ce qui a été détruit et qui se manifeste dans l'état de crise que vivent nos peuples et nos pays aujourd'hui". Cf. Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine Pour Temps de Crise: Christianisme et Reconstruction de l'Afrique, Paris: Karthala, 1993

that tries to merge theory and praxis. It takes into account the concerns of Inculturation and Liberation Theologies and at the same time claims to be a step ahead in that it focuses not on theoretical elaboration but on the praxis orientation of African theology. From this perspective a question arises as to the best way to reconstruct Africa.

The fourth chapter proposes reconciliation and forgiveness as the way forward for reconstruction. This reconciliation takes place at different levels beginning with the relationship between Africa and the West; reconciliation of Africa as a whole with itself but also reconciliation between Africans themselves is needed so that together they may work for the re-building of this continent. This reconciliation process is based on the therapy of re-telling painful stories.<sup>4</sup> It implies, on the side of the perpetrators of violence, the recognition of the harm done to the other party, while on the side of the victim; this requires a conscious effort of recalling the suffering. Only then can the victim forgive the one who has wronged him or her. And together the agent of suffering and the victim will be able to work together for the reconstruction of this continent. For there will be no reconstruction without reconciliation and forgiveness. Are we still reluctant to tread this path lest our efforts remain in vain? Are we afraid that future generations will judge the Reconstruction movement as “irrelevant” just like the Inculturation and Liberation movements?

As I prepare myself to start my ministry as a missionary in Africa, the theme of reconstruction challenges me. It calls me to become actively involved in the transformation of the African society. For me the *kairos* is now, the opportune time to work for the betterment of the continent is now. Also the theme of reconstruction poses a

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<sup>4</sup> This double pain of recalling to mind one's suffering is a very important step, if a true healing is to take place.

challenge to all those who are involved in African Christian Theology at the academic level to make a difference this time. For the question remains: Are we going to produce a theology that is relevant to Africa, or is reconstruction going to remain another paradigm invented for the intellectual curiosity of theologians? Is Theology of Reconstruction going to make an impact this time? Unless theology takes into consideration the plight of the Africans at the grass roots, it will remain academic. Working for reconciliation is one way of making theology of reconstruction practical.

Why should we embark on this work? Why bother about theology and reconciliation? My own background prompted me to reflect on the future of this continent and my mission as a Missionary of Africa in a continent that is very much torn by endless conflicts. I was born of a mixed marriage between a Hutu and a Tutsi. I come from the Great Lakes region and particularly from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this place there is a lot of political unrest mainly because the question of ethnic origin has been very much politicised and many people are being rejected, despised and denied their nationality because they belong to a particular tribe. Consequently for decades, this region has been bathed in bloody conflicts which have claimed the lives of millions of people in Burundi, Rwanda and Congo.

So it is a challenge to a theological institute such as Tangaza College to develop an interest in African Christian Theology. So far such an interest in African theology is lacking,<sup>5</sup> and attempts to nurture such a theology have met with dismal results.

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<sup>5</sup> There has hardly been any reference to African Christian Theology in theological treaties given at Tangaza College. Yet most of the students who are trained in the college are going to work in Africa. Very few students register for the course on AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY. As an illustration last year the course had to be cancelled from the timetable because only three students had registered for it.

An active participation in the ministry of reconciliation will be a sign of commitment to transform the African society. Practically, I find it difficult to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to people who are suffering either because they are the cause of so many conflicts on this continent or because they are victims to such an extent that they cannot forgive. On which soil is the seed of the Gospel going to land? How can a divided people undertake the work of reconstruction? The story of Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) shows that it is impossible to achieve anything if divided; hence reconciliation is an essential element in the reconstruction of Africa.

The method used for collecting the data for this essay was primarily library research enriched with some personal experience with the victims of war, mainly refugees.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **THE SITUATION IN AFRICA**

Africa is paradoxically a continent that is very rich and yet poor. It is clear that there are many problems that hinder its development. What is most striking is the way Africa is engaged in a work or movement of self-destruction and self-annihilation through various conflicts all over the continent. The magnitude of these problems is so big that there seems to be no hope for the future of Africa. While some scholars target the West as being responsible for Africa's misfortunes, others call on Africans themselves to accept their responsibility as a starting point for rebuilding and reconstructing Africa. Even though we cannot see into the future, the continent has many potentialities that can allow it to rise from the ashes. There is hope that this century is going to make the difference, but it is up to each one of us to help this dream become a reality.

#### **1.1 Africa: A Rich Continent**

Africa is a wealthy continent, the richest continent in the world. God has bestowed it with enormous natural resources.<sup>6</sup> People flock from all over the world to admire the beauty of Africa: its forests and animals, its rivers, its mountains, its fauna and flora. It has most of the precious minerals that the world needs: Gold, Diamond, Titanium, Uranium, and Copper. Recently, another mineral has been discovered in the Great Lakes

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<sup>6</sup> Ka Mana, L'Afrique va t-elle mourir?: Essai d'éthique politique, Paris: Karthala, 1993, p. 35

Region called Coltan. It is found especially in the deep forest of Maniema in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This mineral is mainly used for the fabrication of arms. There are also vast amounts of petrol to be found on the continent. One could still go on boasting about the richness of this continent. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that Africa has no equal in the world with regard to natural resources.

At the same time Africa is the poorest continent of the world. It is hit by a myriad of problems: poverty, misery, violence, lack of basic infrastructure, weight of external debt and poor sanitation facilities. Education has been impaired by illiteracy and poor systems of education, not mentioning the level of corruption amongst the leaders and lack of managerial skills and bad governance that is ruining the little economic prosperity that was left from the colonial time. Naturally, such ineptitude ultimately leads to an oppressive environment for the common people.

Thousands of people are dying of hunger, famine and malnutrition everyday in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and other parts of the continent. The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has become rampant and is now affecting the most productive age, stripping the continent of its potential human power. Thousands of children are dying of malaria and other diseases that could easily be treated if proper medication was available in time. According to the recent gathering of world experts on AIDS in South Africa, some countries will even disappear from the world map in a few years to come. Adding to all this, there are also natural calamities such as the floods in Mozambique in 2000<sup>7</sup>, the cyclones on the islands of the Indian Ocean and the drought in many parts of the continent.

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<sup>7</sup> On the impact of the floods in Mozambique, Africa News Bulletin (ANB), No. 392, 15th of June, 2000, pp. 18-19

This is the sad picture of the rich and yet poor continent of Africa, *The Hopeless Continent* according to the English magazine *The Economist* of May 13th - 19th, 2000. Other terms currently used in the international mass media to depict Africa are "Lost Continent", or "Sick Child of the International System".<sup>8</sup> For Ka Mana this is a paradoxical reality. He asks:

Why is it that while we incontestably dispose of immense natural and human resources we remain one of the poorest and miserable people of the planet? Why are we still depending on the North?<sup>9</sup>

The international superpowers have been observing Africa closely and greedily because of its riches. They have been fueling conflicts in order to have an upper hand on Africa's minerals. Joke Hartmans<sup>10</sup> and Alain Labrousse<sup>11</sup> have made interesting reports that show how armed conflicts in Africa are financed by the sale of diamonds and drugs trafficking with the complicity of multinationals such as The De Beers company in South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

## **1.2 Africa: A Continent Torn by Conflicts**

Following what has been said above about Africa's riches, one would have

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<sup>8</sup> Jean- Emmanuel Pondi, "The Political Economy of Africa's Reconstruction" In: Mugambi, J.N.K., ed., The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations, Nairobi: All Africa Council of Churches, 1997, p.40

<sup>9</sup> Ka Mana, L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir?: Essai d'éthique politique, Paris: Karthala, 1993, pp. 35-36

<sup>10</sup> Joke Hartmans is a co-ordinator of Fatal Transactions Campaign, a Dutch NGO. This NGO has recently launched an international diamond campaign to prevent the participants in armed conflicts in Africa from using the proceeds of the sale of natural resources.

<sup>11</sup> Alain Labrousse is the current director of the Geo-Political Observatory of Drugs in Paris.

<sup>12</sup> For a full report on Diamonds and Drugs fueling African Conflicts see *New People* No. 67 July-August 2000, pp. 13-22

expected Africa to be among the most developed continents of the world. Unfortunately its development has been hindered for a long time by many unresolved conflicts beginning with the slave trade, colonialism, the cold war and neo-colonialism. As Mulunda Nyanga Ngoy Daniel<sup>13</sup> puts it "the continent of Africa is known today for its historical situation of conflicts, poverty and misery".<sup>14</sup>

From the time of the slave trade down to our age the situation of Africa has only been worsening. If the slave trade and colonialism were an evil brought from outside, today the evil is brewed inside Africa with its endless conflicts aimed at destroying each other. "While at one time Africa had external enemies, her people are today involved in a violence directed against their own kind, as can be seen in the civil wars".<sup>15</sup> In his analysis of the situation Mulunda suggests and concludes that the end of the Cold War brought more internal conflicts and destruction to this continent.<sup>16</sup>

### **1.3 Africa: A Violent Continent**<sup>17</sup>

#### **1.3.1 Violence**

Recently I was shocked to see that almost everyday the Rwandese television takes delight in showing the skulls of the victims of the 1994 genocide. It reminded me of the

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<sup>13</sup> Mulunda Nyanga Daniel is an ordained minister from North Katanga in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is the Executive Secretary for International Affairs of the All Africa Conference of Churches.

<sup>14</sup> Mulunda Nyanga Ngoy Daniel, The Reconstruction of Africa: Faith and Freedom for a Conflicted Continent, Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997, p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Peter Kanyandago, "Violence in Africa: A search for causes and remedies" In: Mary N. Getui and Peter Kanyandago, eds., From Violence to Peace, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 10

<sup>16</sup> Mulunda Nyanga, op. cit., p.1

<sup>17</sup> Even though we are aware that not everybody on the continent is engaged in violent activities, nevertheless we would like to stress the magnitude of violence on the continent.

millions of Rwandese who were violently killed during that time including my aunt, her husband and her two children.

The images that come to us from Sierra Leone are those of terrific brutality: crude amputation of arms, legs, lips and ears. According to *New People*, a Pan-African Magazine of Missionary Awareness in Africa, as a result of the conflict, between 1992 and 1999 half the population of 4.5 millions Sierra Leoneans have become displaced or have fled the country. 75,000 people lost their lives and about 3000 kidnapped children are still unaccounted for, and hospitals are full of victims.<sup>18</sup>

We know the horror that the Salvation Islamic Army (SIA) has caused to the Algerian people since 1992. The same story happens in Northern Uganda where the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) kidnaps people and abducts children from school. As a result 300,000 people have been killed and more than 400,000 are displaced. Kenya is not exempted from the situation of violence. The newspapers are full of reports on violence: tribal clashes, disputes over land and fierce domestic violence, especially against women. From Algiers in Algeria to Cape Town in South Africa, from Casamence in Senegal to Ogaden in Ethiopia, the story is that of violence. This is what Peter Kanyandago says about violence in Africa:

Our concern is that the type and magnitude of violence on the continent against people, institutions and the environment, especially that violence which comes in a form tending towards self-destruction and self-annihilation have reached a level which is making it practically impossible for African societies to survive normally.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *New People*, No. 67, July-August 2000

<sup>19</sup> Kanyandago, *op. cit.*, p. 7

### 1.3.2. Refugees and the Displaced

According to the Internally Displaced People<sup>20</sup> (IDP) survey, the region of West Africa hosts more than three million internally displaced persons. In Rwanda it is estimated that 400,000 to 600,000 people out of a population of 6,000,000 are internally displaced following the ethnic conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the number is estimated at 1 to 1.5 million. The war that started in 1998 has cost the lives of 100,000 civilians and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Congolese. The IDP population of North Eastern Uganda is estimated at 300,000 people. In Kenya the old rule of *divide et impera* has played a big role in maintaining the *status quo*. The state sponsored ethnic violence, which occurred at the eve of two successive presidential elections, displaced thousands of people from their homes in the Coast Province and the Rift valley. Similar upheaval occurred during the conflict between Kikuyus and Kalenjins in 1993, 1995, and 1997.<sup>21</sup> It is also estimated that out of 17,000,000 refugees worldwide, 6,000,000 are on the African continent.<sup>22</sup>

Looking at this situation Kanyandago asks the following question:

How can a society hope to survive when most of its energies are spent on looking for ways of destroying itself and when so many people are dislocated or are on the move?<sup>23</sup>

All these conflicts are very complex in both their nature and origin. Some of them

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<sup>20</sup> Janie Hampton, ed., Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey, London: Earthcan Publications, 1998, pp. 41-97

<sup>21</sup> See the article on Kenya by Binaifer Nowrojee In: Janie Hampton, *ibid.*, pp. 65-68

<sup>22</sup> Kanyandago, *op. cit.*, p. 7

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

are politically motivated mainly because of a democracy that is badly understood in the African context.<sup>24</sup> Others are related to a desire for mutual exclusion such as in Burundi and Rwanda whereby Hutu and Tutsis have been fighting for decades. In Somalia different chiefs have engaged their people in clan conflicts because of a thirst for power. In South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe the struggle opposing Black and White populations is based on race and land issues. Elsewhere as in Nigeria and Sudan it is religion that divides the people.

This entire situation has left a continent of wounded people. We can only think of the survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the victims of land-mines in Mozambique and Angola, those who have seen their children dying of hunger in Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, those who have seen their parents slaughtered, their wives and children raped. The memories of many Africans are loaded with all these painful events from the past, still fresh in the minds of many. The destruction is so total that the mission of rebuilding this continent seems to be impossible. That is why Mulunda asks:

When is the reconstruction of this continent going to start and who will be the architects of this project? What is the way that will lead to authentic freedom and reconstruction?<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Since the Conference of La Baule in France, African leaders have been urged to follow democracy as the way forward to greater development in Africa. To please their masters, but also from the pressure from their people, African leaders opened the door to a multiparty system of leadership. But unfortunately, as Adam K.A. Chepkwony puts it, the campaigns for political pluralism dubbed as democratisation have not led to peace and prosperity in Africa. Instead old tensions have been revived and new ones created in almost every country in Africa. See Adam K.A. Chepkwony, "Political Pluralism in Africa" *In*: Mary Getui and Emmanuel A. Obeng, eds., Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999, p. 243

<sup>25</sup> Mulunda Nyanga, *op. cit.*, p. 1

## 1.4 Who is to blame?

In Africa things do not just happen, whatever happens must have a cause. In their search for the culprit, the one who is responsible for Africa's misfortune, some Africans tend to load everything on external forces; mainly the former colonial powers and the Western powers. For instance without ignoring the share of responsibility of the Africans themselves, Kanyandago highlights and emphasises the external causes of the problems of Africa. He says:

The fundamental cause of ... violence can be found by referring to the way the fundamental socio-cultural and economic structure have been negated by the West.<sup>26</sup>

It must be acknowledged that the West is partly accountable for the problems on the continent: the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank on local economies, the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed on African countries, also arm trafficking and drug dealing, and the looting of the raw material and other resources, yet it must also be accepted that Africans are still free persons. If African rulers are corrupt it is because they have accepted to manipulate external influences and powers for their own selfish interests. African leaders are primarily interested in feeding their own accounts based in foreign countries, while at the same time contracting debts, which will not save the interests of *Wanjiku*.<sup>27</sup> So there is a nuance that needs to be made. The West has certainly

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<sup>26</sup> Kanyandago op. cit., p.11

<sup>27</sup> Wanjiku is a woman's name. In the Kenyan situation of economic hardship, Wanjiku has become the symbol of all those women who struggle to feed their large families with the little money they get from selling vegetables.

contributed to the degeneration of this continent, but Africans must also accept their own responsibility. Blaming the other for one's own problem is a sign of underdevelopment and indicates a lack of maturity. Pondi makes it strikingly clear when he says:

Africans should stop accusing the rest of the world for their many problems and begin to probe into their own behaviour and decisions in order to establish their part of responsibility in the worsening of the socio-economic and political situations of their richly endowed continent.<sup>28</sup>

Also in the same line, Mugambi says that "we cannot continuously blame others even if we are aware of their role vis-à-vis our unimproved situations."<sup>29</sup> In an address to the participants of the Global Ecumenical Forum in Limuru, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, urged the participants to accept and take responsibility for their problems lest we abdicate our responsibility to somebody else. According to him, there is a need for an inner transformation to rid ourselves of our mentality of dependency on others.<sup>30</sup> Real reconstruction will only be possible when Africans will stop blaming the West and become masters of their own destiny.

### **1.5 With a leap of faith**

To achieve reconstruction there needs to be radical change of mentality. For many, Africa is indeed "*The Hopeless Continent*", sapping the confidence of the people.

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<sup>28</sup> Pondi, op. cit., p. 40

<sup>29</sup> Mugambi, "The Role of Churches in the Reconstruction of Africa", In: Mugambi, J.N.K., ed., The Church and Reconstruction of Africa, op. cit., p. 244

<sup>30</sup> See the Report of the Global Ecumenical Forum. The theme of this forum was "Systems of Conflict-Visions of Peace. 20-23 March 2000". The Report was published by FECCLAHA (Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes & the Horn of Africa.)

This is a pessimistic way of looking at reality; as if Africa is bound to fail and will never rise from the ashes, with no hope for the future. Drawing from the African Synod held in Rome in 1994 and echoing the words of the African Bishops, we can say that there is hope.

The Synod was intended to be an occasion of hope and resurrection at the very moment when human events seemed to be tempting Africa to discouragement and despair.<sup>31</sup>

The Synod Fathers were very much aware of the situation in Africa: increasing poverty, urbanisation, the international debt, the arms trade, the problem of refugees and displaced persons, demographic concerns, the threats to family life, the oppression of women, the spread of AIDS, the survival of slavery practices in some places, ethnocentricity and tribal opposition.<sup>32</sup> It is worth recalling that the Synod started at the very time when more than a half million<sup>33</sup> Rwandese were being killed during the genocide, leaving hundreds of survivors still marked with the wounds of this terrible event. Yet the bishops wanted to be signs of hope for a continent that seemed to be hopeless for many.

In spite of the negative picture that Africa has on the international scene, there is still hope that Africa will rise again. This is what the hopeful Mugambi has to say about

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<sup>31</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 1

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, n.51

<sup>33</sup> Recently the Rwandese government undertook a census which will enable the country to know with great precision how many Rwandese were killed during the genocide. But so far the number of deaths are still at the level of estimations. It is a futile exercise that will not help to rebuild the country. People died as a result of the genocide. Now priority should be on rebuilding the country and helping the Rwandese to live together as one people.

the future of Africa in the preface to the book: The Church and Reconstruction of Africa:

Africa enters the twenty-first century full of hope and great expectations. Its youthful population is its most valuable asset, charged with aspirations to excel and participate in the affairs of the world together with peers in other regions. Africa's natural and human resources are so abundant as to make their continent the centre of world trade and industry.<sup>34</sup>

Also the Pope acknowledges that "despite the mainly negative picture which today characterises numerous parts of Africa, and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the Church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome."<sup>35</sup> In the same line Jean Marc Ela says: "We in the church must take up African's current problems and look at them in the light of the gospel, in order that "hope may germinate" in the center of our reality."<sup>36</sup>

Indeed Africa has all the potential of rising from the ashes of its destructive past and receiving new life out of dead and dry bones (cf. Ez 37:11). The only pre-condition is that, all have to tap into the well of our resources, ignite our energies, and work together. This is a particular call to African theologians to conceive and produce a theology that is inspired by the plight of the children of this continent and at the same time empower them, so that we may all together embark on the project of reconstruction, preparing thus, a bright future for the generations to come.

Today African theologians are called to be aware of and to get in touch with the real situation of their people, in order to play the role of catalyst in the rejuvenation of

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<sup>34</sup> Mugambi, The Church and Reconstruction of Africa, op. cit., v

<sup>35</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 14

<sup>36</sup> Ela, "Christianity and Liberation in Africa" In: Rosino Gibellini, ed., Paths of African Theology, London: SCM Press, 1994, p.147

their continent. More than ever they are called to point the way and help lay the foundations for the reconstruction of this continent. But before we look at what is required of Africa's theologians today, let us look at the various responses of theologians at different times in the history of African Christianity. For only God created *ex nihilo*, human beings build always out of something that already exists.

## CHAPTER: 2

### TRENDS IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIETY

African theology is a wide topic with abundant literature. This chapter will neither be concerned with the historical development of African theology<sup>37</sup> nor with the definition of terms such as African theology, African Christian theology or Christian African theology.<sup>38</sup> Equally questions such as whether there is an African Theology or not; how should it be done; by whom should it be done and where should it be done are not part of this chapter. We are much more concerned about the relevance of the existing African theologies to the African reality. How much have they been able to empower the Africans for the transformation of the society? This is what we are looking for in studying the trends in African theology. Scholars agree that there are two main lines of African theological thought, mainly the school of inculturation, the most widely spread, and the

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<sup>37</sup> Ngindu Mushete a theologian from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has written on the history of theology in Africa. See Ngindu Mushete, "The History of Theology in Africa" In: Kofi Appiah - Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., African Theology en Route, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 23-35. Tinyiko Sam Maluleke has also made a study of African Christian Theologies covering up to the year 2000. See his Article "Half A Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of The Emerging Agenda for the 21st Century" In: Mugambi, ed., The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations, Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997, pp. 84 - 114

<sup>38</sup> Charles Nyamiti has tried to explain the difference between all these terms. According to him there are various forms of African theology: African traditional or non-Christian theology (cf. ATR), and African Christian theology in a narrow sense. See Charles Nyamiti, "Contemporary African Christologies: Assessment and Practical Suggestions" In: Rosino Gibellini, ed., Paths of African Theology, London: SCM Press, 1994, pp. 63-64. John Mbiti does not see the importance of entering into the debate over the terminology to be used. See John Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology" In: Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., op .cit., p.83

school of liberation.<sup>39</sup>

There are two different starting points in the African theologies of inculturation: some theologians use the Bible as the starting point and compare biblical teaching with the African reality while others elaborate their theology from the African cultural background. The latter looks at theology either from the light of the African worldview or selects particular themes from the African reality on which to build theology.

As for liberation theology, there are two kinds of liberation theology in Africa. The first one is modeled on the North American Black Theology; it is called the South African Black Theology. It is inspired by black consciousness in a racist society.<sup>40</sup> The second one has its inspiration from the South American liberation theology and is simply called African liberation theology. Due to the situation of women in Africa, there is also an emerging theology of liberation from a woman's perspective.

The present African theologies have subsequently produced Christologies, which are in keeping with each theological school. As Christology is the most widely explored theological field in Africa, we will limit ourselves to that, hoping that other theological fields will be explored in the future. There are some indications of interests in other fields

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<sup>39</sup> There are theologians who have proposed a different classification. Nyamiti had distinguished three different trends, mainly (1) the speculative school with stress on philosophy (2) the social and biblical school with emphasis on liberation and the biblical approach and (3) the militant school with emphasis on liberation as in the South Africa Black Theology. Ngindu Mushete distinguished between theology of adaptation and critical African theology; the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) had distinguished three different theological trends: (1) A theology which admits inherent values in the traditional religions as preparation for the gospel; (2) a critical theology which comes from contact with the Bible and dialogue with non-African theologies and (3) Black Theology in South Africa. See Kofi Appiah-Kubi, African Theology en Route, op. cit., p. 192 and Martey, African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, p. 69

<sup>40</sup> After the end of apartheid, the Theology of Liberation in South Africa was transformed into a Theology of Reconstruction and Nation-Building. Just before the end of apartheid, Villa-Vincencio expressed this Theology of Liberation in his book: A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992

of theology.<sup>41</sup> In this same line it is worth mentioning the themes that East African Theologians have addressed.<sup>42</sup>

At the end of this section we shall give a critical assessment to these theologies. The main criterion will be based on the following question: have these theologies answered the problems that Africans are facing today?

## **2.1. African Theologies of Inculturation**

Proponents of this trend present Christianity in relation to culture. Aylward Shorter is recognised by many as the main proponent in this field of African Christian Theology of Inculturation.<sup>43</sup> The basic principle is that Christianity as we have it today has its origin in the Jewish and Semitic cultural matrix. So the aim of African Theologies of Inculturation is to relate Christianity to the particular African cultural milieu.

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<sup>41</sup> The book of Laurenti Magesa, African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1997, is an example of Moral theology in the African Context.

<sup>42</sup> Mugambi, J.N.K and Magesa, L., eds., Jesus in African Christianity: Diversity and Experimentation in Christology, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1984; Magesa, L., and Mugambi, J.N.K., eds., The Church in African Christianity: Innovative Essays in Ecclesiology, Nairobi: Initiative Press, 1990; Mugambi, J.N.K., and Wasike, A.N, eds., Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity: Exploratory Essays in Moral Theology, Nairobi: Initiative Press, 1992; Wasike, A.N., and Waruta, D.W., eds., Mission in African Christianity: Critical Essays in Missiology, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2000; Waruta, D.W., and Kinoti, H.W., eds., Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1994; Getui, M.N., and Kanyandago, P., eds., From Violence to Peace in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1998; Magesa, L., and Nthamburi, Z., eds., Democracy and Reconciliation: A Challenge for African Christianity, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999; Kinoti, H.W., and Waliggo, J.M., The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Shorter has written a lot on African Christian Theology and inculturation of the gospel in Africa. Here are some of his publications in this field: Shorter, A., African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975; Towards A Theology of Inculturation, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988; Christianity and the African Imagination: After the African Synod, Resources for Inculturation, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1996

As Cecil McGarry says:

"Christianity as such" does not exist. It exists when people believe; and it becomes deeply rooted when it touches people and their lives where and as they are. The faith is not a culture, but it can only find expression and live within cultures.<sup>44</sup>

Hence African Theologies of Inculturation try to re-appropriate Christianity, which they consider to have been for a long time foreign to the African cultural and religious reality, in terms and categories that are properly African. In other words, these theologies try to express Christianity in languages and expressions that African people can understand, so that Christ can speak to the hearts of Africans. Drawing from Waliggo, we can say that "inculturation is that movement that aims at making Christianity permanent in Africa by making it a people's religion and a way of life which no enemy or hostility can ever succeed in supplanting or weakening."<sup>45</sup>

### **2.1.1 From the Bible to African reality: a comparative approach**

This approach takes the Bible as the basis for African theology. The first to write on this approach is Kwesi Dickson in "Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs."<sup>46</sup> There are also theologians such as John Mbiti<sup>47</sup>, Byang Kato<sup>48</sup> and Kofi Appiah-Kubi among

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<sup>44</sup> Cecil McGarry in his preface to the book Inculturation: Its meaning and urgency by J.M waliggo, et al., Nairobi: Paulines Publications for Africa, 1986, p. 8

<sup>45</sup> J.M Waliggo, "Making a church that is truly African" In: J.M. Waliggo, et. al., Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency, op. cit., p.13

<sup>46</sup> Kwesi Dickson and P. Ellingworth, eds., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth and New York: Orbis Books, 1969. This book shows the interest that African theologians put on bible, at their meeting in Ibadan, in Nigeria in 1966.

<sup>47</sup> John Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, London: Oxford University Press, 1971. Mbiti focuses on New Testament eschatology and relates its insights with African concepts.

<sup>48</sup> Byang Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975

many others who stress this biblical foundation to African theology. Mbiti and Kofi Appiah- Kubi have a similar approach, extracting from biblical teaching Christological aspects that are relevant to the African cultural reality. Hence, for Kofi titles such as Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour, and Healer<sup>49</sup> are relevant for people whose lives evolve around genealogy and the rites of passage (birth, baptism, Eucharist and death), while Mbiti says that a title such as Christus Victor is relevant in the context of the struggle against the powers of evil. To sum up, Mbiti says:

As long as we keep the Bible close to our minds and our hearts, our theology will be viable, relevant, and of lasting service to the church.<sup>50</sup>

### **2.1.2 From the African reality to Christology: A thematic approach**

Contrary to the comparative approach, the thematic approach starts from the African world. The proponents of this movement build their theology from particular themes taken from the African reality.

Charles Nyamiti can be considered as the pioneer of the Ancestor-Christology. Like other African theologians he asserts that most African traditional societies believe in the ancestors. As a matter of fact many theologians have exploited this area of ancestor

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<sup>49</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "Jesus Christ: Some Christological Aspects From African Perspectives", In: J.S. Mbiti, African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology, Bossey: Ecumenical Institute, 1977, pp. 51-65 also quoted by Charles Nyamiti, "African Christologies Today" In: J.N.K Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds., Jesus In African Christianity: experimentation and Diversity in African Christology, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1998, p. 18 with the addition of the titles of Mediator, Intermediary and Power.

<sup>50</sup> John Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology" In: Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres, eds., op. cit., p. 91

Christology: Christ is the brother- Ancestor;<sup>51</sup> he is the *Joto* Ancestor.<sup>52</sup> Bénézet Bujo calls Christ the proto-Ancestor, the unique ancestor, the source of life, the model of ancestorship, the ancestor *par excellence*. Drawing from the Akan understanding of the role of the chief, Pobee calls Christ the Great or Chief ancestor, the *Nana* ancestor.<sup>53</sup>

The Title of Christ as the Elder is also prominent in African Christian Theology.<sup>54</sup> Drawing from the Luba understanding of Christ, Kabasélé presents Christ as Chief.<sup>55</sup> But Sawyer is reluctant to attribute the title of Chief to Christ. According to him the role of the chief in the African Society is not clear. Hence he prefers the title of Elder Brother to those of Chief or Chief Ancestor. He argues that chiefs are not in direct contact with their subjects.<sup>56</sup>

Anselme Titianma Sanon<sup>57</sup> sees Christ as Head and Master of Initiation. Christ went through all the stages of life: birth, growth, and puberty. His death-resurrection is the highest stage of the initiatic period. Having gone through this process, Christ can lead

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<sup>51</sup> Nyamiti developed this theme in his book *Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Gweru Zimbabwe, 1984

<sup>52</sup> Penoukou sees the mystery of the Christ Event in the light of the cosmotheandric vision of the Ewe-Mina of Togo, his own people. In this cosmotheandric relationship, Christ is seen as the mediator between God the Father and the whole creation. He is the source of life and the fulfillment of the cosmotheandric relationship in the world.

<sup>53</sup> Pobee, J. S., *Toward an African Theology*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1979, pp. 81-98. African women theologians such as Oduyoye and Amoah are also critical about Pobee's presentation of Christ as Nana Ancestor.

<sup>54</sup> Wachege speaks about Christ as our *Muthamaki*. This is the Gikuyu understanding of Christ as Elder. See Wachege, *Jesus Christ Our Muthamaki: An African Christological Study based on the Agikuyu Understanding of Elder*, Nairobi, Phoenix Publishers, 1992. Kabasélé relates Christ to the African Ancestors. Christ is the Elder Ancestor, the *Mulaba Mukulu* which means the Elder among the Anointed. Like God, Christ is the *Mvidi Mukulu*, the God- Elder. *Mvidi* is the name that the Baluba of the Democratic Republic of Congo give to God. It literally means Spirit. See Kabasélé, François, et al., eds., *Chemins de la Christologie Africaine*, Paris: Desclée, 1986, pp. 127-141

<sup>55</sup> Kabasélé made a study of the Luba Missal in which Christ is seen as the *Mukalenge*, the Chief. See Kabasélé, François, op. cit., pp. 109-126

<sup>56</sup> Sawyerr, H., *Creative Evangelism: Toward a New Christian Encounter with Africa*, London, 1968, p. 72ff see also Mugambi and Magesa, eds., *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and diversity in Christology*, op. cit., p. 20

<sup>57</sup> Anselme Titianma Sanon is from Burkina Faso. Currently he is the titular archbishop of the archdiocese of Bobo Dioulasso. The role of the Master of initiation is to accompany the initiates during their initiatic period and to lead them towards a strong vital experience of communion with the life of their people. According to him fundamental dynamics of initiation must be recovered and put at the service of the new family in which Christians belong. As initiation led to social and spiritual maturity, now through the Church, Christ the Master will lead Christians to full human social and spiritual life. He is the one who leads his brothers and sisters towards the fullness of life.

others to full maturity.

Others focus their Christology around the healing ministry of Jesus. There are various titles given to this healing ministry of Jesus. Just to highlight one, Shorter calls Jesus the Witchdoctor.<sup>58</sup> It is a holistic approach to healing that takes into consideration all the dimensions of the human person. Following the many conflicts that we are witnessing in Africa, this Christological title needs to be revisited and developed so that the healing ministry of Jesus remains relevant to the many wounded Africans.<sup>59</sup>

## **2.2. African theologies of liberation**

Liberation Theology in Africa was articulated during the Pan-African conference of Third World Theologians, in Accra in 1977.<sup>60</sup> Before this period, theologians focused on the re-capturing of the African cultural heritage and the re-appropriation of Christianity in such a way that it could easily be understood by Africans. Accra paved the way for a new trend in theological thinking that focused on the oppression of the African. Addressing Christianity in terms of culture alone was not enough. The participants felt the need of taking the contemporary problems of Africa as the *locus* for theological research. To be relevant, theologians must respond to the needs of the people. This was

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<sup>58</sup> As Shorter acknowledges himself, this title can be misleading. See Aylward Shorter, Jesus and the Witchdoctor, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985, p. 8. One could give a more general title of Healer. This would include the concept of Witchdoctor, Diviner, Medicine Man, Nganga, since all these people are interested in healing. Cécé Kolié also developed the theme of Christ the Healer in François Kabasélé, et al., eds., Chemins de la Christologie Africaine, Paris: Desclée, pp. 167-199

<sup>59</sup> To emphasise the importance of Jesus' healing ministry, Domingues, Fernando has just written a book on the Christological title of Christ as our Healer. Christ Our Healer. A Theological Dialogue with Aylward Shorter, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2000. Using the image of Christ as our healer may help in the ministry of reconciliation.

<sup>60</sup> As a result of commitment to the plight of many Africans, the Accra meeting gave birth to the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT). Its aim was to meet regularly and study the problems that are facing Africa today.

stressed during the Accra meeting in the following terms:

Because oppression is found not only in culture but also in political and economic structures and the dominant mass media, African theology must also be liberation theology.<sup>61</sup>

The focus of African theology of liberation developed as a response to three main evils: racism in the context of south Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe; poverty and oppression, in the context of the countries in the South of Sahara; and sexism in relation to the subjugation of women in Africa. But, as we shall see, this does not go without criticisms from the proponents of the theology of inculturation. Sometimes the distinction is so sharp that it seems as if one has to be either on one side or the other.

### **2.2.1 Black Theology of Liberation**

The South Africa Theology of Liberation emerged out of the black experience under the apartheid regime. It is a reflection resulting from the experience of oppression, colonisation, humiliation, denial of basic human rights, domination and suffering. Out of this experience arose a black awareness and a black consciousness of political oppression and economic exploitation. Simon Maimela defines this theology in the following terms:

Black theology can be defined as a conscious and systematic theological reflection on black experience which is characterised by oppression and suffering in white racist societies in North America and South Africa.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi, *op. cit.*, p 194

<sup>62</sup> Simon S. Maimela, "Black Theology" *in*: Rosino Gibellini, *op. cit.*, p. 182

This theology is a “conscious and systematic reflection on the black experience of suffering”.<sup>63</sup> It is an experience that arises from a situation of conflict which, “ In South Africa, this includes racial conflict, ethnic conflict, class conflict, ideological conflict and conflict between the sexes.”<sup>64</sup>

For Desmond Tutu:

Black theological reflection has become part of the black consciousness involvement which is concerned with the evangelical aim of awakening in Blacks a sense of their intrinsic worth as children of God.<sup>65</sup>

In this experience God is looked upon as the Liberator who came to free Blacks from the oppression of the Whites. God has a preferential option for the oppressed, the poor, the downtrodden, and in this context, he has a preferential option for the Black. Hence the task of Black Theology is:

To conscientize, teach and empower the oppressed blacks in a society controlled by white supremacy to join hands with the God of exodus and Jesus Christ to be instruments of their own liberation.<sup>66</sup>

The South African Black Theology<sup>67</sup> was very much influenced by the North American Black Theology, which arose out of similar situations. It was the Civil Rights and Power Movement of the 1960’s in North America that forced the theologians to

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<sup>63</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi, op. cit., p.98

<sup>64</sup> Emmanuel Martey, African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1993, p .97

<sup>65</sup> Desmond Tutu, “The Theology of Liberation in Africa” In: Kofi Appiah-Kubi, op. cit., p. 163, see also Martey, p. 104

<sup>66</sup> Martey, op. cit., pp. 98-99

<sup>67</sup> It is worth to mention some of the leading theologians in South Africa. Among them there is Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Simon Maimela, Albert Nolan, the late David Bosch, Dorothy Ramodibe, Manas Buthelezi. This list is not exhaustive.

reflect on the sociopolitical events of that time. Two main figures were influential at this time; mainly Martin Luther King who involved himself in the civil rights movement and Malcom X, a North American Muslim and nationalist who sharply rejected Christianity as it was lived at that time. They were both assassinated.

The aim of Black Theology in North America is twofold. First of all it aims at defining Christ in terms of his color. Secondly it aims at relating Christ to the Black people's experience.

It is worth noting that though South Africa Black Theology was inspired by North American Black Theology, the two theologies have a different approach. While most of the North Americans call for revolution with violent means if necessary, the South Africans have a more reconciling approach. While Black Theology in North America is too confrontational and exclusive of Whites, the Black Theology in South Africa involves both the oppressed and the oppressor in the struggle for liberation. Allan Boesak from South Africa, explains well this reconciliatory approach when he writes:

What we need is a spiritual and a political Exodus out of the situation of oppression toward a situation of liberation, out of the situation of inhumanity, darkness, and hatred toward a situation in which we, both Whites and Blacks, can regain our common humanity and enjoy a meaningful life, a wholeness of life that has been destroyed.<sup>68</sup>

To sum up, the main aim of the South African Black Theology is to address the racial issue. It aims at empowering Black South Africans to fight for their liberation without excluding the Whites or opting for violence. The post-apartheid era focuses on

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<sup>68</sup> Allan Boesak, "Liberation Theology in South Africa" In: Kofi Appiah-Kubi, op. cit., p 173

the theology of reconstruction.<sup>69</sup>

Now let us look at the second form of liberation theology in Africa, the one which deals mainly with the situation of poverty in Africa, simply known as Liberation Theology.

### **2.2.2 Liberation Theology**

This trend<sup>70</sup> is wider in its scope than Black Theology. It seeks liberation from all that negatively affects the essence of the human being, created in the image of God. It also fights for liberation from all that alienates the human person from himself, from society and from God. But chiefly, proponents of this movement focus on poverty, which is a result of both external and internal forces in Africa. Scholars of this trend distinguish between what they call anthropological poverty and structural poverty. For instance according to Englebert Mveng, anthropological poverty is the poverty that "strikes at the very being, essence, and dignity of the human person."<sup>71</sup> It is an *indigence of being*, he says. Mveng refers to structural poverty as the poverty that results from the sinful structures of our society but also the pitiable condition of African states and economies, incapable of providing the basic needs to citizens.

This poverty according to liberation theologians is political. It is a consequence of sinful structures that serve the interests of individual persons rather than the interests of

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<sup>69</sup> On the Theology of Reconstruction, see chapter 3 of this essay.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Marc Ela from Cameroon is a major protagonist in the African Liberation Theology. Some of his books have been translated into English i.e. African Cry, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1986 and My Faith As An African, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988

<sup>71</sup> Mveng Englebert, "Impoverishment and Liberation" In: Rosino Gibellini, op. cit., p. 156

Africa. These oppressive structures need to be addressed and radically changed. It must also be acknowledged that the oppressors are found both within and without Africa. Externally, Africa's suffering is caused by the unjust laws of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Structural Adjustments imposed on African governments. Internally, Africa suffers from bad governance and the squandering of public funds by the leaders. Today we could also recognize the negative effects of globalisation in the world economy and modern means of communication.

Our people's situation cannot be attributed solely to the penetration of our continent by the multinationals, which regard Africa simply as a play ground for the superpowers. We must look for internal factors in the dispossession of African masses. This process continues despite modernization programs and growth efforts, since their benefits are monopolized by an elite in an Africa of ever-worsening economic and social disparities.<sup>72</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that African Liberation Theology calls for the destruction of all the structures of sin and their spawn so that Africans can truly free themselves. In this struggle for liberation the historical Jesus becomes the model for liberation. He is the liberator who has come to set his people free from any kind of oppressive structural sin.

This type of theology has been very much influenced by the Latin America Liberation Theology which takes to heart, and is influenced by, the poverty and suffering of many Latino-Americans. The contemplation of the earthly ministry of Jesus gave theologians the inspiration and the power to fight for the liberation of the poor. This is a praxis-oriented theology, a context-aware and socio-political conscious liberation

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<sup>72</sup> "L' Afrique des bourgeoisies" In: *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 1981 as quoted by Jean Marc Ela, In: Rosino Gibellini, ed., *Paths of African Theology*, op. cit., p. 139

theology.

Liberation Theology not only addresses the question of race and oppression, but also the problem of gender discrimination in Africa. Hence African women have started developing a theology of liberation from their perspective, a theology that is truly African.

### 2.2.3 Women's liberation theology

Women's Liberation theology in Africa, as in the West, arises from the context of sexism. Women in Africa try to reflect on the impact that Christ has on their struggle for liberation, encouraging them to develop an African feminist theology. For example, Teresia Hinga discusses three common perceptions of Christ as understood by Africans and their implications for women.<sup>73</sup> For Oduyoye and Amoah, Christ is the anointed one who liberates, the companion, friend, teacher, and true child of women, the caring compassionate nurturer of all.<sup>74</sup> Oduyoye prefers to use the term feminist in its global and universal sense.<sup>75</sup> There are voices that prefer to distinguish between feminist and

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<sup>73</sup> Teresia, M., Hinga, "Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women in Africa" In: Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R.A., Kanyoro, eds., The Will to Arise, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1992, pp. 183 - 194. The three common perceptions are:

- Christ as the personal saviour and personal friend

- Christ as the embodiment of the Spirit, the power of God, and the dispenser of the power of God to those who follow him

- Christ as an iconoclastic prophet who criticises the status quo. Though feminism in Africa is an extension of feminism in the West, Hinga is not afraid of criticising Western feminist theology. There are two perspectives in the Western feminist theology. The most radical view holds that cultural and social institutions, including religion, are so irredeemably warped by patriarchy that they can hardly be considered as allies of women as they try to liberate themselves. The reformist view, as Hinga calls it, holds that social institutions are not distorted beyond repair, and theology can help women in their struggle for emancipation and justice.

<sup>74</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Elizabeth Amoah, "The Christ for African Women" In: Virginia Fabella, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds., With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books 1988, pp. 43- 44.

<sup>75</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Feminist Theology in An African Perspective", In: Rosino Gibellini, op. cit., p.167

women's theology. In Africa some make a distinction between Women's Black Theology and Africa's Women Theology. Irrespective of this, Africa's women share the same experience of discrimination and oppression at the cultural level as well as societal and ecclesial level. Their liberation goes in the line of liberation from male predominant societies. Dorothy Ramodibe from South Africa defines feminist theology in the following terms:

By feminist theology I understand the act of reflecting on the significance and influence of our faith on the experience of women with a view to making women fully human. Women need to emerge as full human beings, liberated from all forces that have kept them in slavery for the past years.<sup>76</sup>

Those who write about Theology of Liberation do not pay much attention to the voice of women. From the feminist theologians point of view, men's theology does not include their concerns.<sup>77</sup> Even when they do include them, they do so from a male perspective. That is why, for instance within the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, at the request of women, a Women's Commission was formed, in order to address women's issues.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Dorothy Ramodibe, "Women and Men Building Together the Church in Africa" In: Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds., With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, p.18

<sup>77</sup> Mary Getui has listed the names of African women theologians, most of whom are associated with the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). Among them there is Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Teresa Okure, Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, Musimbi Kanyoro, Nyambura Njoroge, Isabel Phiri, Bernadette Mbuy-Beya, Musa Dube, Philomena Mwaura, Justin Kahungu Mbwiti, Eizabeth Amoah, Rose Zoe-Obianga and Louise Tappa. See Tangaza Occasional Paper No.10, p. 108. We are proposing at the end of this paper a bibliography of the books and articles written by some of the African Women Theologians.

<sup>78</sup> Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, op. cit., Introduction, x. At the Intercontinental level, Women first expressed the need to be heard during the Fifth Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians which was held in New Dheli, in India in 1981. As a result of this, an Intercontinental Women's Conference was held in Oaxtepec, in Mexico, on December 1-6, 1986. In Africa, women express their concerns through the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. The Circle is the leading organ of Women and theology in Africa. As the title of the book the Will to Arise suggests, women theologians in Africa would like to arise from a situation of exclusion, domination and marginalisation. They are voices that seek to empower African women so that they may eradicate all forms of oppression. Women theologians in Africa are engaged in various activities. Teresia M. Hinga gives a summary

There is a need to encourage and support Women initiatives in theology, so that together as males and females created in the image of God, in partnership they may be able to take an active role in the transformation of the African society. This will avoid, in Africa, the pitfalls of Western Feminism, which is exclusive of their male counterparts. Women and men more than ever should be seen as partners in the common project of shaping the future of the continent. Liberation of women is an essential element in this project. Zoe Obianga expresses well what women are looking for when she says:

Commitment to Christ requires the liberation of African women. They will no longer be slaves: not of uncomprehending and intransigent husbands and brothers nor of a retrogressive society, nor of alienating church structures. They are freed by their faith that opens all possible horizons to them.<sup>79</sup>

Let us now look at the relationship between inculturation and liberation theologies. Are they soul mates or antagonists?

### **2.3 Inculturation and Liberation: opposition or complementarity**

There has been unnecessary tension between the proponents of the two theological

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of African women's theological concerns in her article "Between Colonialism and Inculturation: Feminist Theology in Africa". Their concerns include (1) A critical analysis of the impact of culture and religion in the lives of women (2) Dealing with the historical reality of cultural imperialism which is implicit in the imposition of the Western way of life in Africa (3) The ambiguous impact of Christianity, which has functioned to legitimise colonialism, racism and sexism, in the lives of African women. (4) A continuous re-reading of the Bible as source of inspiration in their struggle for liberation. African women are involved in dialogue with African Traditional Religion; Islam and Christianity; They also concerned with some aspects of African religious life and ritual practices that enhance the subjugation of women. At this point it is worth mentioning at least two important books in which African women raise their concerns: Oduyoye, M.A., and Musimbi Kanyoro, R.A., The Will To Arise: Women, tradition, and the Church in Africa, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1992 and Musimbi Kanyoro, R.A., and Nyambura Njoroge, J., eds., Groaning In Faith: African Women In The Household of God, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1996

<sup>79</sup> Kofi Appiah-Kubi, op. cit., p. 148

trends resulting in a mutual exclusion. For example, Mbiti is very critical of inculturation as a theological paradigm. He says that Black Theology, with liberation as a main concern, is a specifically American phenomenon and has nothing to do with African Theology. The proponents of the inculturation model contend Liberation Theology because of its concern for socio-political issues. According to them liberation does not take into consideration the cultural reality of the Africans.

On the other hand theologians of liberation criticise those of inculturation for lack of praxis. Bishop Desmond Tutu has sharply criticised the African theology of inculturation for its lack of a prophetic calling and its disengagement from the problems that Africans face. He says:

By and large [African Theology] failed to speak meaningfully in the face of a plethora of contemporary problems, which assail the modern African. It has seemed to advocate disengagement from the hectic business of life because very little has been offered that is pertinent, say about, the theology of power in the face of the epidemic of coups and military rule, about development, about poverty and disease and other present day issues.<sup>80</sup>

Ka Mana speaks of the defeat and death of African theology because of a weakness in African Christology and ecclesiology.<sup>81</sup> He gives two reasons why African Theology has failed: the gap between the academic preoccupations of the African theologians and the deep suffering of the people; and the ambiguity of theological discourses of African theologians who, though exalting the values that belong to the past,

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<sup>80</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Black Theology/African Theology - Soul Mates or Antagonists" In: Gayraud S., Wilmore and James Cones, eds., Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1979, p. 483

<sup>81</sup> "L'échec et la mort de la "théologie africaine" sont liés à la faiblesse de sa christologie et de son ecclesologie, à un manque de lucidité dans l'analyse du contexte de notre défaite ainsi qu' à un aveuglement manifeste sur les taches de l'Eglise pour la reconstruction de notre continent." Ka Mana, Christ d'Afrique: Enjeux éthiques de la foi africaine en Jésus Christ, Paris: Karthala, p. 34

have no interest in the past. The two theological trends need not be antagonists if Africa is to produce a theology that is relevant for today. If culture is to be defined as a way of life, then the exponents of inculturation should include in their theology all that pertains to the life of Africans; including their cultural, socio-political, religious and economic concerns. They should strive at producing a theology that is concerned with the day-to-day life of oppression and poverty, which is the lot of many Africans. Likewise Liberation Theology should not confine itself to the socio-political sphere, but strive to liberate some of the African cultures, in as far as they are a hindrance to human development; for example sorcery, witchcraft, fear of evil spirits, subjugation and circumcision of women etc... A true theology of inculturation should be liberating while a true theology of liberation should be inculturated. In the same vein Martey says:

A relevant, contextual and authentic theology for Africa must have a unitary perception of inculturation and liberation. Such a dynamic definition of inclusive theology would lack *neither* an appreciation for traditional religious culture... *nor* refuse engagement in dialogue with the critical issues raised by contemporary political and economic factors - factors that are the main reasons for Africa's crisis and backwardness in world affairs.<sup>82</sup>

#### **2.4 The relevance of the Inculturation and Liberation Quests**

Most Africans theologians are critical about the relevance of African Theology to the lives of many in Africa. They acknowledge that there is a gap between the theoretical elaboration of African theology and its practical impact on the African people. African Theology remains a monopoly of a few scholars. None of the beautiful theological

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<sup>82</sup> Martey, op. cit., p 131

elaborations seem to be reflected in preaching, in catechetical instructions, or life experiences.

For Waliggo, instead of concentrating on issues of primary importance for the people, African theologians concentrate on theological academic gimmicks which are at the periphery of people's living experience and hoping [SIC].<sup>83</sup> For Nyamiti, none of the existing theologies has been relevant, except the Black Theology in South Africa.<sup>84</sup> For Bujo the inculturation model is totally irrelevant, he describes it as an ideological superstructure at the service of the bourgeoisie.<sup>85</sup>

Marc Ela believes that it is not evident that the problems which worry the clergy are also the problems of women and men whose basic rights are being flouted. He says that while people wallow in misery, theologians are centering their reflection and action on religious rites and customs.<sup>86</sup>

Martey seems to have understood well what Africa needs at this particular moment. According to him what is needed is a prophetic theology that uncompromisingly faces the realities of colonialism, classism, racism, neo-colonialism, sexism, capitalist imperialism, ideological conflict, disunity and underdevelopment, and everything that militates against the realisation of social justice.<sup>87</sup> Drawing from Desmond Tutu, this prophetic stand can only happen when a radical spiritual decolonisation occurs within each exponent of African Theology. According to him it is only when African Theology

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<sup>83</sup> John M. Waliggo, "African Christology in a situation of suffering" In: J.N.K., Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds., *Jesus in African Christianity, Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*, Nairobi: Acton Publishers, p. 103

<sup>84</sup> Charles Nyamiti, "African Christologies Today, In: J.N.K., Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, *Ibid.*, p.34

<sup>85</sup> Bénédet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, p. 71 See also Martey, p. 124

<sup>86</sup> Ela, Jean-Marc, "Christianity and Liberation in Africa" In: Rosino Gibellini, *op. cit.*, p. 137

<sup>87</sup> Martey, *op. cit.*, p. 130

is true to itself that it will go on to speak relevantly to the contemporary African.<sup>88</sup>

In conclusion, it is not enough to think of theology in terms of inculturation and liberation only. Moreover Africa is facing a new situation that calls for a new way of doing theology. All the hopes of the post independence era seem to have faded away and the situation of Africa is ever worsening. Hence some theologians such as Mugambi, Ka Mana, Villa-Vincencio, Mary Getui and others, have felt that there is a need of going beyond mere theoretical elaborations and matching theory and practice in African Theology. So as there was a shift from inculturation to liberation, now the shift is from liberation to reconstruction, with reconstruction as a new paradigm in African Christian Theology.

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<sup>88</sup> Gayraud Wilmore, S., and James Cone H., eds., Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 490-491

## CHAPTER 3:

### THEOLOGY OF RECONSTRUCTION

#### 3.1. New wine, new wineskins

The theme of reconstruction derives from the field of engineering. It is usually applied when something has been destroyed or become dysfunctional. This theme has been applied to the field of African Theology since 1990. The first one to propose it as a theological paradigm is Mugambi. His theology is based on the African cultural and religious heritage. He argues that the churches have to play the role of catalyst as they did in Europe at the end of the Medieval time. Others scholars in this field are Ka Mana and Villa Vincencio. Ka Mana's theology is entirely centered on the Word of God with Christ as the catalyst for social transformation.

The shift from liberation to social transformation and reconstruction begins in the 1990's. This shift involves discerning alternative social structures, symbols, rituals, myths and interpretation of Africa's social reality by Africans themselves.<sup>89</sup>

Incarnation and liberation were not seen as sufficiently adequate to address the new social and political situation in Africa. This new situation was marked by the fall of

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<sup>89</sup> Mugambi, J.N.K., From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p. 40

communism and the end of the cold war. Prior to the collapse of communism Africa had become a battlefield between the Western capitalist bloc and the Eastern communist bloc. Also the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the end of apartheid in South Africa were significantly important. In the early 90's African countries were forced to undertake economic reforms and embrace democracy and multi-partism as a way of improving the socio-political situation of the continent. Churches largely supported this new wind of change.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time the 1990's marked thirty years since the political independence of many African countries. However there seemed to be little evidence of improvement. Instead what people are experiencing is a general crisis, a mega crisis: social, cultural, religious, moral, political and economic and religious crisis. Will Africa ever get out of this crisis? Where will people draw their strength and energy to shape the future of this continent? Is Africa condemned forever?

So, it is in this new context of change, that the theology of reconstruction emerged as an awareness of the role of churches in the social transformation of Africa. There was a need to go beyond the problem of cultural identity fostered in the early sixties as well as the problem of liberation from socio-economic oppression during the late seventies and the early eighties. It was considered that these approaches could no longer appropriately answer the challenges of the new situation. The quest for liberation without any involvement in the transformation of the continent is considered obsolete. The era of beautiful and intelligible theoretical elaboration in theology without any practical

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<sup>90</sup> On the role of African Churches during the wind of change in Africa see Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine Pour Temps de Crise; Christianisme et Reconstruction de l' Afrique, Paris: Karthala, 1993, pp. 87-111. In these pages Ka Mana analyses important documents issued by different churches, in order to guide their Christians.

application to the concrete situation of the people of Africa is dismissed. A new era has begun and it is the era of reconstruction of the continent. Theology must provide guidance and leadership in this work of social transformation and reconstruction.

This quest for reconstruction was already foreshadowed in the works of Emmanuel Martey who saw the need of integrating African Theologies of Inculturation with African Theology of Liberation. Equally important is the work of John Parrat who talks about reinventing theology in an era of reconstruction. Mugambi describes the role of the new emerging theology in the following terms:

This theology should be reconstructive rather than destructive; inclusive rather than exclusive; pro-active rather than re-active; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme-driven rather than project driven; people centred rather than institution centred; deed oriented rather than word oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative; future sensitive rather than past sensitive; cooperative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than impositional.<sup>91</sup>

### **3.2 Theology of Reconstruction: Towards a definition**

So far the Theology of Reconstruction has not yet established itself, it is in the making, still evolving.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, due to its evolving nature, it proves difficult to provide a concise definition.

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<sup>91</sup> Mugambi, From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian theology After the Cold War, op. cit., Introductory Remarks, xv

<sup>92</sup> The year 1993 saw the launching of the Kenya Chapter of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. The guiding theme of this Chapter for the period of 1992-1996 was "Theology of Reconstruction: Towards A Just Africa." Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays edited by Mary Getui and Emmanuel Obeng is the fruit of this ongoing reflection on the Reconstruction of Africa. Still to come is the fruit of another guiding theme of the Kenya Chapter during the period of (1997-2001). The theme is "Confronting life-threatening Issues in Africa: A Liberating Theological Response. On the Kenya Chapter of EATWOT see Mary Getui and Emmanuel Obeng, op. cit., pp.1-9

According to Ka Mana, there are three elements, which need to be taken into consideration in the theology of reconstruction:<sup>93</sup>

(1) The first element is that of a rigorous and lucid analysis of African problems. The theology of reconstruction must accomplish this analysis. Ka Mama insists very much on this aspect. Before we venture in the task of reconstruction we must know what has been destroyed. That is why it was necessary to provide an overall view of the African situation in the first chapter.

2) The second element is that of a practical orientation based on the findings of the analysis, because the theology of reconstruction is essentially practical.

(3) The third element is that of reflection on the relationship between Christians and the world. This presupposes an ecclesiology that is creative, concrete and well articulated so that it can empower the people to be agents of transformation of the society.

For Ka Mana the word of God is the main source of inspiration. From the practical point of view there are four tasks to be accomplished:

- The first task is that of the incarnation: meaning that the theologian needs to be well immersed in the African reality and its problems. This is practically called the immersion experience in the terms of liberation theology.

- The second task is based on resistance to anything contrary to the spirit of the Gospel: basically anything that dehumanises the human person.

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<sup>93</sup> The translation of the three elements into English is ours. We give here the original text in French.

Une triple nécessité s'impose comme axe d'une théologie de la reconstruction:

- La première nécessité est celle d'une lucidité exigeante dans l'analyse des problèmes.

- La deuxième nécessité est celle d'une orientation pratique de la réflexion.

- La tâche sera de penser en profondeur la théologie de la reconstruction comme force de créativité concrète, d'articuler ses principes théoriques sur des perspectives de novation ecclésiologique. Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine Pour Temps de Crise, pp. 113-114

- The third task is that of liberation: to liberate the creative imagination so that everyone may be able to face and overcome the political, economic and cultural impotence from which Africa is suffering today.

- The fourth task is that of inventing: To nurture the seeds of the Kingdom of God in the political, economic, social, spiritual and religious sphere. As Ka Mana says, it is not enough to elaborate theoretical discourses, from clear and precise strategies, the theology of reconstruction should lead to action.<sup>94</sup> Drawing from the above remarks, Ka Mana defines the theology of reconstruction as:

A theory of the global transformation of life in the light of the gospel: a political ethic. It is, from the theoretical point of view, a reflection on the political ethical measure that can serve as a principle of restructuring the global creative imagination of Africa, in order to help the Negro-African to come out of the crisis of which he is dying today.<sup>95</sup>

We will sum up the theology of reconstruction in the following points:

(1) An integral theology: while the theology of reconstruction is a critical analysis and continuation of the previous theologies in Africa, it sincerely tries to combine the quest for cultural identity as well as political and economic liberation. Hence, the concerns of those involved in inculturation and liberation theologies are fulfilled here. The theology of reconstruction is not in conflict with the previous ones. It is rather a third trend

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<sup>94</sup> En effet, il ne suffit pas, pour élaborer une théologie de la reconstruction, de formuler des exigences d'articulation théorique du discours. Il faut que ces exigences induisent une action à partir des stratégies claires et précises. (Ka Mana, *Théologie africaine pour Temps de Crise*, p. 118)

<sup>95</sup> Ka Mana, *Ibid.*, pp. 116- 117. The translation is ours. Elle, [la théologie de la reconstruction] s'articule comme une théorie de la transformation globale de la vie à la lumière de la parole de Dieu: une éthique politique. La théologie de reconstruction est donc, du point de vue théorique, une réflexion sur la mesure d'éthique politique qui peut servir de principe de restructuration globale de l'imaginaire créateur de l'Afrique, en vue d'aider l'homme Negro-Africain de tir de la crise qui l'étouffe et l'étrangle aujourd'hui."

evolving from inculturation and liberation.

(2) That goes beyond to a deeper level: It is a vision for the future. For instance according to Ka Mana there is a need to move from the problematic of cultural identity and socio-economic and political liberation, from the theologies of insurrection against the West to a new vision, from insurrection to reconstruction.

(3) It is analytical: The starting point of reconstruction is the social analysis of the situation in Africa so that it can adequately address the problems that Africans are facing.

(4) Context-aware and praxis-oriented theology: if it is true that every theology should be contextual theology, it is particularly true of the theology of reconstruction. The African reality is the *locus* from which it emerges, a situation of mega crisis.

(5) It seeks to empower Africans to be agents of reconstructions of their continent: This requires the participation of everybody. Thus, as Mugambi explains, it requires collaboration, consultation and cooperation between specialists in all professions. The reconstruction task is a "*projet d'ensemble*" that is a joint effort.

### **3.3 Levels of reconstruction**

According to Mugambi there are three levels of reconstruction: personal, cultural and ecclesial reconstruction: From our view, the personal reconstruction is very much needed in Africa. Individuals need to undergo a process of total conversion, total *metanoia*. This is a prerequisite for the future of Africa. Jesus in his public ministry was simultaneously involved in both personal and social reconstruction.<sup>96</sup> Africans need to be

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<sup>96</sup> Mugambi, From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War, op. cit., p. 6

convinced that they have the power and the possibility to transforming their society.

Cultural reconstruction takes into consideration politics, economics, aesthetics and religion.<sup>97</sup> According to him ecclesial reconstruction should include management structures, financial policies, pastoral care, human resources development and management, family education, service and witness. Theologians have a big role to play in this ecclesial reconstruction. This is how Mugambi sees the role of theology in the project of reconstruction:

Theology is the means by which the church rationalizes its process of ecclesial reconstruction. The theologian at best, should be a catalyst - a facilitator- who makes it possible for the Church to adjust itself to the new social demands of the society to which its members belong.<sup>98</sup>

For him, any theology which does not answer questions that are relevant to the lives of the people, is doomed to fail. The community is the *primus locus* for theology. In the same vein Ka Mana thinks that we need to reconsider African ecclesiology. According to him the task is to view the theology of reconstruction as a concrete creative power, articulating its theoretical principles on new ecclesiological principles.<sup>99</sup> Special attention should be paid to the relationship between Christians and the world. All this makes the theology of reconstruction a multi-disciplinary theology. This is well illustrated by the articles published in the book edited by Mary Getui and Emmanuel Obeng: Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays and that of Mugambi: The Church and

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<sup>97</sup> Mugambi has extensively dealt with this aspect of reconstruction in his book, The Church and Reconstruction of Africa, Nairobi: AACC, 1997, pp. 1-23. In this particular section he adds the moral and theological reconstruction.

<sup>98</sup> Mugambi, From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War, op. cit., p.17  
Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine pour temps de crise: Christianisme et Reconstruction de l'Afrique, op. cit., p. 114

Reconstruction of Africa. Villa-Vincencio emphasises also this inter-disciplinary aspect of the theology of reconstruction.

A Theology of reconstruction, required to address legal, political and economic concerns must be undertaken at the interface of social sciences. As such a theology of reconstruction is by definition an interdisciplinary exercise ... theology is obliged to at once take the challenges and insights of other disciplines seriously, while making its own contribution to this process in a language that makes sense to, and is understood by, other disciplines.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.3 Biblical foundations

The Theology of Reconstruction is very much inspired by God's way of dealing with his people, from creation onwards, through the prophets and kings up to Jesus. It is in this line that Mugambi says, "the Bible is replete with illustrations of social reconstruction."<sup>101</sup> The whole biblical history can be divided into four major periods: the mosaic period, the exilic period, the post-exilic period and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God by the Messiah, Jesus, the man of Nazareth.

The Mosaic period marked very much the proponents of the liberation movement in South America as well as in Africa. Moses was seen as a prominent figure who inspired all those who were called to fight for the liberation of their people. He led Israel from slavery towards the Promised Land. Though Mugambi says that the figure of Moses could no longer be appealing in the era of reconstruction, nevertheless he sees the whole Exodus period as a process of reconstructing the Hebrew society from a slave community

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<sup>100</sup> Charles Villa-Vincencio, A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 276-277

<sup>101</sup> Mugambi, From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War, op. cit., p. 13

to a liberated one. He says "the liberated individual is empowered to create alternative social structures, both for the present generation and for posterity."<sup>102</sup> God was seen as one who sides with the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. As Vincencio puts it, God was part and parcel of the Hebrew story of liberation.<sup>103</sup> Mugambi, therefore, acknowledges that liberation theology did highlight the transformative and reconstructive dimensions of the exodus motif. The role of Moses in the transformation of Africa remains a challenge to all who have a position of leadership on this continent. Africa needs charismatic leaders with clear foresight<sup>104</sup> who can help their people to emerge from the situation that oppresses them, leaders who will confidently lead the people towards "the promised land", a land "full of milk and honey".

The exilic period is seen as the time when prophets sustained Israel's faith and hope with utopian dreams and promises, by instilling in the people the spirit of hope so that they would not loose heart. It is in this sense that a theology of reconstruction is a theology of hope. To maintain this hope, Africans need to be sustained and guided by prophetic leaders with assurance that there is a brighter future, provided that dreams do not only remain dreams, and utopia vain utopia. That is why the hopes of the exilic period needed to be translated into the reality of the return of God's people to their land.

The most significant biblical period, in the view of Mugambi and Vincencio is the post- exilic period. It was the prophets such as Haggai, Ezra, Zecchariah and mostly Nehemiah who actually embarked in the work of reconstruction after the exile.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 39

<sup>103</sup> Villa-Vincencio, op. cit., p. 25

<sup>104</sup> When we speak of leaders we do not only confine ourselves to the political leaders. All those who have, moral, religious and political authority are called to provide leadership, even at family and personal level.

Nehemiah's appeal: "Come let us rebuild Jerusalem" (Nehemiah 2:18) is so inspiring that the All African Council of Churches has taken it as the theme for their Assembly which will be held in Togo in 2002. Nehemiah does not spare his energy in mobilising the whole community in rebuilding not only the temple, symbol of the assured presence of Yahweh among his people, but the whole nation. He not only focuses on the material building but also fights against the exploitation of the people by their own leaders by challenging the leaders. This did not go without opposition, since human beings are reluctant to fully embrace the pains of any social change, preferring at times the comfort of the *status quo*. Villa- Vincencio compares the post-apartheid era in South Africa to the post exilic period whereby South Africa is in the process of building the nation after the destructive years of apartheid which is based on constitutional writing, law-making, human rights and economics on one hand, and on the other hand freedom of conscience.

So far it is Ka Mana who has articulated, a most comprehensive theology of reconstruction based on scripture.<sup>105</sup> He sees the whole biblical story as God's way of reconstructing humanity, especially in times of crises. While Vincencio and Mugambi focus on Nehemiah, Ka Mana's theology of reconstruction is christocentric. Christology is at the heart of his theology. Christ is the key moment in the conscience of humanity, the ethical impulse of history, the ethical pivot of the world.<sup>106</sup> For him Christ is the catalyst and the architect in this process of social transformation.<sup>107</sup> Christ is the one who empowers humanity at large and individuals in particular to undertake any meaningful

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<sup>105</sup> Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine pour temps de crise: Christianisme et Reconstruction de l'Afrique, op. cit., pp. 129-182

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 185

<sup>107</sup> "Il [Jesus] est l'architecte d'un nouveau destin pour le peuple, d'une transformation radicale de sa condition et d'une novation totale de son existence". Ka Mana, Théologie Africaine pour temps de crise, p.165

transformation of society. He is the embodiment of the logic of love to which the world must turn for a better future.

To conclude, we would say that the Theology of Reconstruction is a theology that seeks to integrate theory and praxis. The key concepts in this theology are creative imagination, innovation and invention. Tinyiko Sam Maluleke has pointed out two inherent criticisms to the theology of reconstruction. Firstly, both Villa-Vincencio and Mugambi have been too quick to assume that we are living in a new world order. Secondly, their theologies seem to minimise the previous African theologies of inculturation and liberation.<sup>108</sup> As a matter of fact, though Mugambi insists on the need to go beyond, his theology of reconstruction is reliant on cultural and religious renaissance. While Vincencio's theology of reconstruction is a transforming liberation theology. It is Ka Mana who sees the interconnectedness between inculturation, liberation and reconstruction. Though the latter seems to be more propagated and emerging, the former two are still on. The Theology of Reconstruction is like a third pole in African theology today, hence contemporary African Theology presently maintains three trends: Inculturation, Liberation and Reconstruction. The main strength of reconstruction is that it seeks to integrate theory and practice. So now the question is: How are we going to practically reconstruct Africa? The following chapter proposes reconciliation and forgiveness as ways to achieve this reconstruction.

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<sup>108</sup> Tinyiko, *op. cit.*, p. 107

**CHAPTER IV:**  
**RECONCILIATION AS MODEL**  
**FOR RECONSTRUCTION**

**4.1 Africa and The West**

The nascent African theologies were considered insurrection theologies against the West. On the one hand inculturation theologies believe that the Christianity, presented by the missionaries of the colonial days, robbed Africa of its religious and cultural heritage. The effects of this are deeply ingrained in the mentality of most Africans. On the other hand liberation theologies blame the West for its participation in Africa's poverty and alienation. The Theology of Reconstruction holds the same view, mainly that, through the ages, Africa was destroyed by the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Most of Africa's energy is spent on reacting against the West for inflicting so much pain on the continent. Therefore, it could be said that this attitude, which is shared by many African scholars, has disarmed the people of their own capacity to build and reconstruct this continent. If we are to come to a meaningful reconstruction then we need to come to terms with those whom we blame for everything, mainly to work for reconciliation and seek reparation. The reconciliation with the West implies the following:

(a) A real social analysis needs to be done on the role that the West has played in the

destruction of this continent.<sup>109</sup>

(b) Western countries should acknowledge this responsibility in a formal way with signs of regret and contrition for what they have done. They cannot continuously blame Africans for everything.<sup>110</sup>

(c) There should be a sign of commitment to repair if possible the damage done to the African people.

(d) It is only when the offended raises concern and the offender accepts the truth that there can be real Reconciliation and eventually Forgiveness.<sup>111</sup>

This will set a new basis for the relationship between Africa and the West. So instead of blaming, African theologians should prophetically challenge the involvement of the West in Africa and be ready for reconciliation once the admission or avowal has been made. Effective reconstruction should be a combined effort of the West and Africa; therefore there is a need of fostering a relationship of partnership. Mugambi is right in saying that the international community has a stake in this reconstruction.<sup>112</sup>

#### **4.2 Towards self - affirmation**

When one analyses the African mentality, one cannot fail to recognise that there is an element of low self-esteem and hatred of self among the Africans, especially among the present generation. Hence, this attitude has led to a growing fixation with Western

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<sup>109</sup> Kanyandago, op. cit., pp. 32-33

<sup>110</sup> There is a nice declaration from guilt made some theologians from the West which illustrates well the need of a formal acknowledgment of the responsibility of the West in Africa. See Appendix n.1 of this paper on p. 63.

<sup>111</sup> We have given an example of reconciliation at this level. See Appendix n.2 p.64

<sup>112</sup> Mugambi, J.N.K., ed., The Church and Reconstruction of Africa, Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997 p. 24

culture. There is more and more a loss of interest in local languages and customs leading to a conflict of identification among the youth. This is shown in the way they dress and speak continually of leaving Africa to seek a better and brighter future in Europe or America. Therefore, from this perspective there is a need to develop ways of reassuring the present generation of their worthiness and instill in them a sense of pride so that they may invest their energy in the transformation of the continent. Many Africans are wounded as a result of continual suppression of their rights to affirm their cultural and religious identity. Time has now come to undo the pain of past sufferings by helping the Africans to reconcile with themselves. This is of vital importance, especially for those who have responsibility over the people. One way of doing this is to create fora where people can speak about the way they feel as poor and Africans. What feelings do they have towards the Westerners? As we have said, Europe and Africa are called to be partners in the project of reconstruction, but what is equality in partnership? One way of being equal is to work at the low self-esteem and self-hatred of Africans. People are masters of themselves. It is possible to overcome the fatalistic attitude, provided appropriate help is given. Theologians and pastors are called to take this issue into serious consideration.

### **4.3 Truth and Reconciliation**

The post-apartheid era in South Africa is an era of reconciliation and reconstruction.<sup>113</sup> South Africa managed to cope with the transition by setting up the

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<sup>113</sup> The South African government has set the 16th of December as a day of National Reconciliation.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).<sup>114</sup> This was a forum whereby, not without pain and difficulties, offenders and offended, could meet and have a real fruitful and reconstructive experience. The admission of guilt is not always easy but the Commission made it possible for those who were weighed down by the crimes committed to take courage and tell their stories. Unfortunately while some countries are following this model, others have not. For instance the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which was set up by the United Nations to try the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda, will never bear fruits.<sup>115</sup> It only judges one part of the population. Does it mean that the other part is innocent? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa helped many people to see that both Whites and Blacks were at the same time perpetrators and victims, while in Rwanda, for instance, the impression is that only one group is to be judged for the genocide. Hence, most of those who are tried will always plead not guilty. Admission of guilt is a very important step in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. It restores the dignity of the person who admits the wrong committed and asks to be forgiven. So the role of the churches is to offer such opportunities and fora so that people may have this restoring and reconstructive experience. Truth and admission of guilt is one step towards reconciliation. The second step is that of forgiveness which can only be granted by the offended party or the victim.

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<sup>114</sup> Nigeria has also set a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Even though the whole process entails opening the wounds of the past, nevertheless it has a therapeutic effect. It is important to open the wounds if we want to help people through the process of reconciliation. This is the road to a lasting reconciliation. What is important in this process is to help the victim come to term with his or her own suffering. Once reconciled with himself or herself, then the person can be a true agent of reconciliation and be able to forgive.

<sup>115</sup> The statement we have made seems to give no ray of hope. This will remain true unless both parties in Rwanda are tried. The present ICTR functions on the basis that only Hutu killed in Rwanda. It leads to the victimisation of one part of the population and will never fulfill its role of bringing all the Rwandese together. In Reconciliation it is important not to stress the victimisation of one party while exonerating the other party.

#### 4.4 Reconciliation and Forgiveness

Those who have written on reconciliation unanimously acknowledge that real reconciliation comes from the side of the victims and the oppressed. No other person knows the bitterness of painful experiences. The victims, more than anybody else, need to be helped first to cope with their experience of anger, hatred, bitterness, revenge and despair. Humanly speaking they must be reconstructed before they can really forgive the offenders. In most of the cases pastors are dealing with people who are wounded because of traumatic experiences of domestic violence, sexual harassment, tribal and ethnic conflicts. It is only when the wounded is reconciled with himself that he or she can become an agent of reconciliation.

According to Schreiter victims of violence and suffering must tell their story over and over again.<sup>116</sup> Church agents must lend a listening ear to those who are suffering from any kind of traumatic experience. "The re-telling of traumatic experiences has a therapeutic effect by itself. It contributes to the healing process."<sup>117</sup> Victims of suffering should slowly be helped to forgive. For according to Gregory Jones, the purpose of forgiveness is restoration of communion.<sup>118</sup> This communion is essential for the work of reconstruction. Hence from the point of view of Mulunda Nyanga, forgiveness must be embodied in the life of the churches.<sup>119</sup>

Mulunda Nyanga says that in a conflicted continent, reconciliation is a first step to .

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<sup>116</sup> Schreiter, Robert, J., Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1992, p.71

<sup>117</sup> Maganya Halerimana, Church as agent of Reconciliation: A Reference to the Diocese of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a paper submitted in Tangaza college, November 17, 1999, p. 9

<sup>118</sup> Gregory Jones, L., as quoted by Mulunda Nyanga, op. cit., p. 108

<sup>119</sup> Mulunda Nyanga, op. cit., p. 108

reconstruction. It is of urgency and necessity to train church agents into the ministry of reconciliation. One cannot just venture into this ministry without any preparation. The future of the continent is at stake if churches do not provide adequate and well prepared ministers for the task of reconstruction based on reconciliation. For according to Mulunda Nyanga without reconciliation there cannot be long lasting reconstruction.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.2

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Naturally, my life experience has been marked by the situations of conflict in the Great Lakes region, and to a large extent, the situation of conflicts on the continent. I always wonder what would be my mission, what is my call? I have found that due to the magnitude of the conflicts and the escalation of violence, my mission is that of bringing people together so that they may collaborate in the building of this continent. I am always optimistic that Africa is full of potential, human as well as material. Already I can see that my life experience within an intercultural and international community to which I belong is a sign that people can live together. We live in the same community with Asians, Europeans, Americans and Africans as witnesses of the Gospel in Africa

As we have shown in the first part, the African situation is frequently being considered as hopeless, leading to despair. As the African Synod encouraged us, we are called to be signs of hope to the millions of people to whom we minister. Christ must make sense to them as someone who empowers them and brings them to their full humanity and dignity. But are people ready to welcome a Christ who restores their dignity, while their lives have been shattered by endless conflicts? Are they ready to accept the message of Christ who has come to reconcile humanity with himself and people with themselves? Christ empowers Africans to rebuild their continent, but how can they rebuild the continent while they are divided among themselves? It is out of these situations of conflicts and violence that the interest in African Theology and the Transformation of Africa arose.

The first part of the essay described the situation of Africa in general. The second

part confronted the theology produced by African scholars and its relevance to the African situation. The third part dealt with a new emerging trend in African Christian Theology, mainly the theology of reconstruction. So today African Christian Theology has developed along three trends, and we are now in the era of the reconstruction due to the situation in Africa. In the fourth part of the essay, we are proposing reconciliation and forgiveness as the corner stones of reconstruction. As for Desmond Tutu there is no future without forgiveness we are saying that reconstruction of Africa will not be possible without reconciliation. Within the theme of reconstruction and reconciliation, African theologians are challenged to produce a theology which is inspired by the plight of many Africans, in this context it is the situation of conflict which is the *primus locus* from where theological reflections must begin.

We are challenged to devise a theology, which is no longer only academic, but deeply immersed in the daily lives of the people. The type of theology that Africa needs today is a transformative, reconstructive and empowering theology, a praxis-oriented theology. In a continent where many people have been disarmed of their power to reconstruct because of the destructive effects of endless conflicts, working for reconciliation would be a guarantee of the relevance of African Theology. If we need to reconstruct Africa then we must be working on the building site day and night, reconciling people. All African theologies will have to be reconstructive; hence we can talk about a reconstructive theology of inculturation, or a reconstructive theology of liberation. Drawing from the Association of Theological Institutions of Southern and

Central Africa (ATISCA)<sup>120</sup>, I would say that Reconciliation and Forgiveness is the pot in which we are called to cook the African Christian Theology of Reconstruction. It is a challenge but at the same time a mission.

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<sup>120</sup> This Association was founded in 1985 under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. In the Bulletin of ATISCA, no. 5/6, 1996/ 1997, Special Volume, the Association produced a book with the title Theology Cooked in an African Pot. It was edited by Klaus Fiedler, Paul Gundani and Hilary Mijoga.

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## APPENDIX 1

### ADMISSION OF GUILT FROM NORTHERN THEOLOGIANS<sup>121</sup>

We, Christian men and women from Europe, gathered in Initiative Kindugu, salute the entire church in Africa on the occasion of your Synod 1994. With you, we desire this Synod to become a milestone on your journey toward being a truly African church. As Europeans, we have reason to turn to you. In grief and pain we acknowledge the countless wrongs inflicted on African people. We are ready to identify ourselves with the sins of our ancestors. We have begun to examine the ways in which we ourselves up to this day have taken part in the oppression of and contempt for your dignity and self-determination, politically, economically, ecologically, culturally, and even ecclesiologically. We confess having both individually and communally contributed in various ways to existing social structures as well as to ecclesial paternalism. We regret not always having played our part to undo such injustice. It seems impossible to assess the extent of such sin or even to redress it. We dare ask forgiveness of yourselves and of your ancestors only before God and His Son Jesus Christ who reconciled us to himself and to one another through his own suffering and his death.

We are resolved never to let the memory of our wrongdoings fade but to strive for conversion with courage and self-denial. God alone can bring about the healing. With you we beseech Him for it.

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<sup>121</sup> This text is taken from Africa Faith and Justice Network, *African Synod Documents, Reflections Perspectives*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996, p. 71. Among the theologians who signed the letter are Bernard Haring, Hans Kung and many religious, clerics and lay people.

May God instill in you the conviction and determination to realize the call Pope Paul VI expressed in Uganda in 1969, namely, to root deeply the Christian faith in African soil. We are becoming increasingly aware of the reaching demand this call makes on all of us. Christians everywhere in the world are in need of the revelation God desires to make through the African church. We need and we want to learn from you because we are convinced that God's Spirit has entrusted you with new and wonderful gifts.

## **Appendix 2: The healing power of forgiveness**

### **A mother forgives the murderer of her daughter<sup>122</sup>**

I had finally come to believe that real justice is not punishment but restoration, not necessarily to how things used to be, but to how they really should be. In both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures whence my beliefs and values come, the God who rises up from them is a God of mercy and compassion, a God who seeks not to punish, destroy or put us to death, but a God who works unceasingly to help and heal us, rehabilitate and reconcile us, restore us to the richness and fullness of life for which we have been created. This, now, was the justice I wanted for this man who had taken my little girl.

Though he was liable to death penalty, I felt it would violate and profane the goodness, sweetness and beauty of Susie's life by killing the kidnapper in her name. She was deserving of a more noble and beautiful memorial than a cold-blooded, premeditated,

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<sup>122</sup> This is from the most beautiful and recent book of Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, London, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Random House, 1999, p. 122. The text itself is an extract from Robert D. Enright and Johanna North, eds., Exploring Forgiveness, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

state sanctioned killing of a restrained defenseless man, however deserving of death he may be deemed to be. I felt I far better honored her, not by becoming that which I deplored, but by saying that all life is sacred and worthy of preservation. So, I asked the prosecutor to offer the alternative sentence for this crime, mandatory life imprisonment with no chance of parole. My request was honored, and when the alternative was offered, only then did he confess to Susie's death and also to the taking of three other young lives.

Though I readily admit that I wanted to kill this man with my bare hands, by the time of the resolution of his crimes, I was convinced that my best and healthiest option was to forgive. In the twenty years since losing my daughter, I have been working with victims and their families, and my experience has been consistently confirmed. Victim families have every right initially to the normal, valid human response of rage, but those persons who retain a vindictive mind-set ultimately give the offender another victim. Embittered, tormented, enslaved by the past, their quality of life is diminished. However justified, our unforgiveness undoes us. Anger, hatred, resentment, bitterness, revenge—they are death-dealing spirits, and they will “take our lives” on some level as surely as Susie's life was taken. I believe the only way we can be whole, healthy, happy persons is to learn to forgive. That is the exonerable lesson and experience of the gospel of Marietta. Though I would never have chosen it so, the first person to receive a gift of life from the death of my daughter... was me.