

CHAPTER 6: DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE RECONCILIATION MINISTRY: MODELS AND PROPOSALS

6.1 INTRODUCTION: HOPE FOR RECONCILIATION?

How serious are we about reconciliation? What does the ministry of reconciliation look like? Up to now we have looked at what happened in the Afrikaans Churches during the Apartheid years, the constitution of and work of the TRC, and the efforts of the Afrikaans Churches to bring about reconciliation. Now we want to ask the same question Alex Boraine asks when he thinks about reconciliation. Is it possible for a country, a nation to be healed and to be reconciled, or is it only possible for individuals or groups? Can there be healing and reconciliation of a nation in a meaningful way? (Boraine, 2000:360). Are we going to have lasting reconciliation in South Africa during the years to come? How will it be accomplished? Is their hope?

The researcher has asked the following question to seven leaders and ministers in different Afrikaans Churches: *Do you have hope for reconciliation in the country – not only at highest levels, but also on grass-roots level, in the congregations?* How do these seven people see the future of this country? Do they have hope? These persons have been selected because of their position in the church and the contributions, positive or negative, they have made in the past about issues in our country.

- Dr Isak Burger, President of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

As regards our country, *I am a bit worried*. There is escalating polarisation in our country because of certain things that happen e.g. young people who do not get jobs. The ongoing RDP makes things very difficult in our country. At a meeting I told President Mbeki that they have to look into it. I believe that the majority of white people do not have a problem with racism, but you still have individuals whose skins are very thin.
Hope? Yes and no. We have come a long way. I think that the problem in the future will not be the tension between black and white, but tension between revolutionary- and moderate factions. The opposition party of the future will not be a largely white party, but a revolutionary black party.

I have hope. I don't have a 1% option to leave the country. But I see things that I'm worried about. *But when we look at the church, I have hope, although I don't see growth in the white churches. But the church is growing in leaps and bounds amongst the black and brown citizens of our country. The church has a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate reconciliation and it is the one place that can be a window to show how reconciliation can and must take place.* (Addendum 1)
(Researcher's Italics)

- Dr Isak Brink, Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk. He is a lecturer at the APK Theological Seminary and also responsible for the department of Congregational Ministry of the APK.

Do you mean reconciliation between people? *(Yes)*

In our church I am involved in situations where there is a need for people to reconcile with one another.

As regards reconciliation between churches, we (the APK – R) are not fighting with anybody. We ask our congregations to normalise relationships. We experience more and more that invitations to local communities come our way. It becomes easier and in some places there is even the exchanging of pulpits between churches.

When we talk about reconciliation between people, then we must remember that *there will never be reconciliation between light and darkness and I don't think the Lord asks that of us.* The Lord made it very clear that He didn't come to bring peace between light and darkness. Because of that, *I think it is an illusion to think that everybody in this country can live together as reconciled people.*

(Q: So you have no hope?) *No, I have absolutely no hope, because this is not what the Lord asks of us. Reconciliation between believers and tolerance, yes that is something else. Tolerance we propagate as far as we go, but I don't think it is the task of the church to reconcile people with one another in the first place.* Yes, reconciliation with God and that reconciliation will work through according to the second table of the Ten Commandments. It does not mean that the church must not officially say that it wants it. This we will do but with the absolute knowledge *that I don't think reconciliation between people is possible.*" (Addendum 2)
(Researcher's Italics)

- Prof. Theuns Dreyer, Ned Hervormde Kerk van Afrika. (NHK) He acted as Moderator of the General Church Synod of the NHK. At present he heads the Theological College of the NHK at the University of Pretoria.

It depends on what one understands under reconciliation. When you look at it theologically, it is reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ. But it also has social implications. If it is, like Paul says, that you have peace with God, and reconciliation and peace have nearly identical meaning, then this peace with God must also spill over to your neighbour and the community. Do I have hope? Reconciliation is not something cheap. It has its price. Bonhoeffer wrote about it. With a nearly 80% Christians in this country, there should be hope. But now, we had the same situation before 1994, and we had Apartheid. With this I want to say that man is a sinner although he is a redeemed sinner, but with this I don't want to say that you must give more weight to sin than to redemption. I want to say that this reconciliation is expensive and it is a process, and in our country there is still a lot of racism. And racism is the counter pole of reconciliation. There is still a lot of work to be done. Just think about the gap between the Afrikaans Churches and the English Churches. A question that arose from time to time is why haven't the English churches confessed to what happened in the Anglo-Boer War?

Do I have hope? Yes, where there is faith, there is always hope. But it is a hope and an expectation for which one must work. It is not a cheap reconciliation. The church is primarily the agent for reconciliation in the community. The church is the community of reconciled people that God gave to a society. It must be the model for those outside the church. But the problem with the church is the division in the church. Those outside the church want to know how the church can propagate reconciliation, when there cannot be unity in the church. There is an appeal to the church to move closer to one another, but it is also an appeal to the local church, to treasure unity and reconciliation and to live it. Yes, I have hope, but we must know that we live in a society where there is still a lot of tension and things like poverty, unemployment, Aids, etc. The reconciliation task of the church is unlimited. But something nearly as important is the question: What is your calling in this situation? Otherwise you must move to Australia, etc. But as long as you are here, and the Lord wants to use you to be an agent for hope and reconciliation, then you must do what you must do. (Addendum 6) (Researcher's Italics)

- Dr Willem Nicol, Minister DRC Universiteitsoord. For many years he was one of the younger voices in the DRC against apartheid and all the pain and violations of human rights.

I think we are very much blessed. I perceive these issues in very definite categories. I was afraid of right wing terrorism and I think the reason it didn't manifest, is because the Afrikaner had a proper upbringing. There are too few terrorists amongst the Afrikaners so that you can't get the snowball effect. When we look at our society in general and you notice what is going on in Zimbabwe, you realise they had too many wars. When people are warring too much, they become wild. In our society people know that they must stick together because of bread and butter issues. I don't think the powers that would like to break this country, are strong enough and the powers that keep us together are too strong. The immense poverty in our country is linked to the whole world economy, which is in dire straits during this time. For things to get better there must be some big economical growth in the whole world. I do not think we continue to employ so few people in the mainstream economy. These are the difficult macro economical questions, and I don't know how much hope I have for this. Deep in my heart, I think man is a wonderful creature. There will be plans. Although the mainstream economy can only provide for half of the people, the others will find that they must stop putting their hope on jobs. They must plant their own carrots on their own plot.

Q: So big a percentage of people indicated that they are Christians. Don't you think that the Christian hope can carry through this whole quest for reconciliation?

There are things going on and because of our Christian upbringing that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, *there are more and more congregations that are doing things that can be the catalysts to help the poor to help themselves. I think the basic Christianity of people will make a difference in the end.* (Addendum 4) (Researcher's Italics)

- Mrs. Marina van Schalkwyk, Minister's wife, DRC Lynwoodrif. She was the chairperson of the General Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church's Woman League.

Q: "As I'm listening to you, I gather that you have a lot of hope for the future?"

R: Absolutely, although it is a slow process. I'm concerned about our own people. They tell me that some pupils in our high schools are really ultra right wing-orientated. We must understand that, because they are the children who don't get jobs". (Addendum 5)

- Prof. Adrio König. Professor-emeritus of the University of South Africa (UNISA) and pastoral help in DRC Verwoerdburg-Stad. During the apartheid years he was a well-known voice in the DRC against the apartheid policy of the government.

I'm careful of the word 'reconciliation'. To say there must be reconciliation in the country. I cannot think about reconciliation other than as a theological reconciliation. Then I must say 'no', because then we must come to a point that we say that all people in Africa have been reconciled with God, and I think that is an illusion. I would rather say: the hope that there will be 'peace' or 'stability' in our country. Then I would say 'yes'. I just try to give another connotation, away from the theological idea of reconciliation.

You know our church to be politically conservative but if I look at what happened in the church the past ten years, I must tell you it is not just a leap, but a quantum-leap. The *attitude towards people* outside the church, towards other faith communities and even our own missionary work, etc. *has changed a lot*. But it's because the reality outside the church has changed and people look at it differently. Because we are at school together, we work together and suddenly we realise that our attitude must change. *I have hope that we will have stability and peace and a more tranquil atmosphere in our country; that there will be a climate of acceptance and mutual respect for each other. I think this is what is happening at the moment.* (Addendum 8) (Researcher's Italics)

- Rev. Koos Uys. One of the ministers of the DRC Roodekrans, a middle-and upper class, mostly white, suburb of the City of Roodepoort

"Positively! I just realise that I, as minister of the congregation, must work more diligently in that direction." (Addendum 7) (Researcher's Italics)

When one look at these statements, there is a general feeling of hope, but it must be a reconciliation carried by the church to the people. The church must be the model of how reconciliation actually works.

- Nico de Wet, a young Afrikaans speaking student who actually grew up in Japan where his parents, Rev. Tobie and Annalie de Wet, are missionaries.

Nico came to stay in a “township” next to Stellenbosch in the New South Africa. In a letter to his family and friends dated 15 November 2005, he testifies about his hope for reconciliation in South Africa.

He is staying with a Xhosa family who, together with several other families in the community of Kayamandi, the traditionally “black” township of Stellenbosch, are housing foreigners who come to SA to volunteer at local schools and crèches. He is, however, the first and only “white” South African amongst the volunteers, and of this apparent record his “black” host family is very proud! He testifies that he is enjoying his stay in Kayamandi and is experiencing the warmth and hospitality of his host family. The energy and optimism of the people is overwhelming and exciting.

In spite of all the positive things that he is experiencing, there is a darker side. He says:

...the saddest aspect of places like Kayamandi is not the poverty itself but the fact that it is nearly completely separated from the privileged classes of South African society. For the majority of privileged South Africans, Kayamandi is, as every other “township” in South Africa, completely avoidable if one so chooses. In fact, one needs to make an effort to be aware of the situation(s) of these neighbourhoods/subtowns. Apartheid has quite skilfully made South Africa into a musician that holds two opposite extremes right next to one another with the one extreme knowing virtually nothing of the other.

This “separation”, however, is the reality of the entire world; yet here in South Africa it is so bizarre, for the privileged are physically and emotionally separated from the underprivileged in spite of the diminutive distance between the two. It is like placing a city in Japan, for example, right next to a town in Malawi - two completely different worlds operating right beside each other. It is somewhat shocking that eleven years has passed since the dismantling of the Apartheid laws, yet little has changed. Eyebrows of “white” people still rise when they hear of my residence in Kayamandi. It is amusing, though saddening, as I walk into Kayamandi, to see heads turn with stunned, white faces as they drive past me in their vehicles.

He ponders the fact that so few white people have ever been in a township and have never seen the schools, they don't know about the broken families, about child abuse and the many who grow up without the presence of a father. They have stereotyped black people as those who will stab, rape and mug one if he dares go into the township.

...Well, I have sustained no stabs or any vicious blows by the way. In fact, all I get from these people are smiles. These people smile and are happy, regardless of their abject poverty and are most friendly toward me. There are many, in fact most I have come across, who attempt fervently to break the cycle of poverty; who are people with great integrity. There are people here with hope and energy that "skrik vir niks!"(Fears nothing)

But they need help. There are barriers that not even the most talented and energetic can overcome. The challenge for me, and every other "Whitie", in this country is not merely to reach out and become aware of the lives of "black" people, but also to become part of these people and allow them to become part of us. They are not merely "Blacks"; they are our brothers and sisters, our fellow South Africans, our fellow Africans, and our fellow human beings. We need to literally hold hands and rebuild this country together. We need to help one another! The fact is: everyone will be better off! Through friendships respect and trust are built much easier.

I am so proud to be African, especially South African! The energy and opportunities in this country are truly unrivalled! But it is sickening that many of us live in prosperity, while many of our fellow South Africans are uncertain whether they can feed their families for the day. I agree with the sentiment that the past cannot be blamed anymore. We are ALL accountable for what happens NOW, TODAY, in this country!

Can we still turn our backs on the situation in our beloved country? Can we as Afrikaans Churches keep on ignoring the proposals of the TRC?

The Lord has given to individuals and groups of people the insight and the methods of helping and assisting people to get rid of pain caused by circumstances in the past.

In the next few paragraphs models will be looked at that can be used as instruments in helping churches to understand reconciliation.

6.2 MODELS OF RECONCILIATION MINISTRIES

One of the problems of faith communities and especially the Afrikaans Churches in South Africa, with the exception of a few of the ‘mega-churches’, is how to start working on a plan to bring about reconciliation in communities. For many years churches have been busy in townships and other informal communities to help with soup-kitchens, literacy classes, upliftment of women and other projects with very good results, but it has still remained something that “we are doing for them.” Many church members busied themselves with these, without becoming involved in the day to day living of those with whom they worked – without knowing anything more than, maybe the names of the “helpers”. I have experienced that in many of these cases it is still the idea of the “have’s” reaching down to the “have nots” and that the latter had to be very thankful for what has been done for them. But when all is said and done, the “have’s” returned to their plush suburbs and homes, without worrying about or inviting the other party to visit or have a meal together. Reconciliation is much more than this and therefore it is so important that churches be accompanied on the road to reconciliation by organisations whose task it is to assist with this.

Some of the models of reconciliation ministries that are at the moment being used in our own and some other countries will be discussed in the next paragraphs. Congregations and groups, who are really committed to work towards reconciliation in their communities, may find a suitable model for their context or can be helped to work out their own program.

6.2.1 Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM)

The Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM) was set up on 1 August 1998. It grew out of the Healing of Memories Chaplaincy Project of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture. When the TRC was established, it soon became apparent that only a minority of South Africans would have the opportunity to tell their stories before the

TRC. It was argued that platforms needed to be available for all South Africans to tell their stories. It was in this context that the Healing of Memories workshops were developed by Fr Michael Lapsley as a parallel process to the TRC.

In his book, *Michael Lapsley, Priest and Partisan. A South African journey. (1996)*, Michael Worsnip recorded the life of Michael Lapsley, the Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories. He was born in New Zealand in 1949, at the beginning of the Apartheid era in South Africa. At the age of thirteen he read the book by Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for your comfort*, which had an incredible impact on his life. At the age of seventeen he entered the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM), an Order in the Anglican or Episcopal Church. In 1973, at the age of 24 he arrived in South Africa and enrolled at the University of Natal (Durban) where he also worked as a chaplain to students on two black campuses and one white campus until 1976. When he came to South Africa he was a pacifist and his speeches and sermons displayed a passionate and convincing commitment to pacifism based on his belief in the value of humanity and the human person. He had begun to understand the sharp realities and the implications of living in South Africa with a white skin. Soweto 1976 was a turning point in his life and on 30 September 1976 he left for Lesotho, which at that stage was already the base for many fugitives. He was asked to continue as National Chaplain-in-Exile by the Anglican Student's Federation.

His years in Lesotho were characterised by ups and downs and in the end he left Lesotho and went to Britain for consultation with the Director of the SSM. During this time it was decided that he should enrol at the University of Zimbabwe and he was able to secure for himself a job in the Diocese of Harare. On 1 August 1985 he became the rector of Mbare, a township in Harare.

During his years in exile outside South Africa, Lapsley was actually a thorn in the flesh of the South African government and it was on 28 April 1990, that he had opened an envelope with magazines from South Africa and a letter bomb exploded in his hands. He lost both hands, the sight in one eye and part of his hearing.

After his recovery he returned to South Africa and worked in the Diocese of Johannesburg headed by Desmond Tutu. He became chaplain of the Trauma Centre for

victims of violence and torture from 1993 to 1998 and during this time he developed the Healing of Memories workshops as a parallel process to the then forthcoming TRC (Worsnip, 1996; Du Toit, 2003:264-265).

IHOM seeks to contribute to the healing journey of individuals, communities and nations. In addition to running workshops the institute also holds seminars, discussions and sermons which are aimed at assisting individuals and groups to cope with traumas of the Apartheid past. Workshop models are being developed to help people deal with feelings such as anger, hatred and guilt about the past, in order to move towards reconciliation and forgiveness in the interest of self-healing. An experiential way of learning about and from the past is used in the workshops.

Each of the workshops facilitates an individual and collective journey, which explores the effects of the nation's past. Emphasis is placed on confronting the issues raised on an emotional, psychological and spiritual level, rather than on an intellectual one. The workshops provide a unique opportunity for participants to experience and relate their unique journey, while sharing with others in theirs. Common themes that arise in a journey – such as anger, hope, hatred, joy, isolation, endurance and a discovery of the depth of common humanity that are shared – are reflected upon. Participants work together to create a celebratory liturgy which includes poetry, dance, song, prayer and readings. This life-affirming ritual functions as a symbolic release from destructive memories. These workshops provide encouragement to people to take an important step on the path towards healing and wholeness. It attempts to assist victims to become victors so that they are helped on their road to creating a new life for all. (IHOM Pamphlet of Introduction)

These workshops are seen as just one step, although often important, in the journey towards healing and wholeness. Healing memories does not mean forget the past, but rather try to find a way of no longer allowing memories to paralyse or destroy participants. It is important to find that which is life-giving and to put all that is destructive behind; to find ways of preventing history repeating itself and of breaking the

cycle of victims and victimisers that has been lived with for so long. These workshops are an attempt to assist victims to be victors, and help them on the road to new life.

International workshops have been conducted as response to invitations in the following countries: Rwanda, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, East Timor, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Northern Ireland, Germany, Australia and different cities in the USA.

The researcher attended one of these workshops in the Western-Cape and can testify to the immense help he experienced, to become free of memories from the past that were still lurking in the darkness of the mind. After this experience, he tried to establish how many Afrikaner people had attended one of these workshops. The reaction? A shocking few! In an article, *This takes some understanding and effort!* in *Footprints*, the Newsletter from IHOM, David Botha of Buvton (Bureau for Continuing Theological Training and Research – Stellenbosch) and facilitator at IHOM, made the following comments:

White Afrikaans speaking people have a defective insight into the pain other fellow South Africans had to suffer because they lack meaningful contact with them. The emphasis here is on “meaningful”. They tend to deny the gross atrocities that were done to other people during the Apartheid years because it is too painful to acknowledge. They also disclaim any complicity in the cruelties of the past. They often excuse themselves with the statement: “We did not know.” This leads to a dismissal of any responsibility for the past. But they are also ashamed of the truth and afraid of being blamed for things they did not do.

Like all other people *they also prefer to suppress their own pain rather than to deal with it openly.* (Researcher’s Italics) This is especially true for those who were operationally involved in the propaganda for and maintenance of Apartheid. Men are mostly the victims of this suppression. This pain is aggravated by anger towards the political leaders of the past who used them and who now refuse to take responsibility.

Afrikaans speaking people had an ambivalent experience of the TRC process and many even ignored it completely. They are therefore suspicious of anything – like our Institute – that has any alliance with the TRC.

To expect from them to attend a three-day workshop is asking a lot. Mostly they are not prepared to make such a big sacrifice. ... Church politics also plays a role in the fact that potential workshops do not take place. Internal

politics in congregations and between congregations often smother initiative. The leadership is mainly responsible for this. These are some of the realities we face in trying to involve more white people in our workshops. ...It is of utmost importance that we do involve everyone in our society in our workshops. For only together we can become whole!

In Chapter 5 of his thesis, C H Thesnaar (2001) examines in detail the liturgical moments of a weekend workshop. This will not be repeated here but what is necessary for this discussion will be referred to.

Within the South African context, as is true of others also, it is important that victims and perpetrators must realise that attending such a workshop and taking part in the liturgical elements of healing is not a warranty for healing and reconciliation between them. *Every workshop warrants the first step on the journey to healing but the journey cannot warrant that a person will, after attending, be healed already.* (Researcher's Italics)

What is the aim of the journey? Every journey is in fact a collective journey, which wants to determine the effect of the years of Apartheid on victims and perpetrators. It is to remind each individual of the past so that it can be dealt with. Accent is laid on the effect of Apartheid on the emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects and how to handle it. This type of journey provides the unique opportunity for victims and perpetrators of different cultural backgrounds to visit examine and experience their own individual journeys. During this process they can also share in the journeys of others through their stories.

During the journey at the workshop, every victim and perpetrator will have the opportunity to spend time on individual reflection, creative exercises and listening in small groups to each other's stories. There will also be opportunities for participants to reflect in the big group on general themes and issues that surfaced in the small groups. Themes that usually emerge are: anger, aggression, hope, hate, isolation, guilt, endurance, shame, pain, suffering, etc. Questions such as, where was the church during this time, also surfaces. Why did the church and government lie to us? Must I forgive? Can I forgive? How does forgiveness work? Must we confess to one another?

The impact of the story-telling and the discussion of the themes and questions are so intense during the big and small group meetings that the participants become aware of one another's humanity. Together with this each one becomes aware that he or she shares in the other's humanity.

See Addendum 24 for some of the elements of a weekend workshop program.

The effectiveness of this workshop is based on the creativity and adaptation in any given situation. It is important to know that this journey is only the first step for each one on the road to healing and wholeness. This can help to make a contribution to the process of reconciliation in South Africa (Thesnaar, 2001: Ch 5).

6.2.2 Mercy Ministries South Africa (MMSA)

Mercy Ministries SA (MMSA) is part of Mercy Ministries International (MMI) with its head office in Switzerland. From their **Mission Statement** it is clear *that Mercy Ministries is an international, cross cultural, professional group with the passion to impact a needy world by caring for, and equipping, Christian workers through the integrated ministries of member care, ethnic reconciliation and community development. As a Christian community, with shared vision, MMI practice these ministries in different places around the world.*

The Cross is central to all aspects of our ministries. Our priorities are to offer Christ centred services to the least evangelised, highly traumatised, least developed, and/or complex humanitarian emergencies. We are committed to developing cross-cultural resources on behalf of and for Christian workers. We initiate and encourage interagency co-operation and standards to better develop, serve and protect Christian workers....

In South Africa, MMSA concentrates currently on Biblical ethnic reconciliation which flows over into community development. It would also like to develop the ministry towards member care for Christian workers (pastors, missionaries, etc.) because we are all very well aware of the need for that in our country.

The process by which people are accompanied in Biblical reconciliation was first developed by Dr Rhianon Lloyd.

Dr Lloyd grew up in Wales and had been trained in medicine and psychiatry and, after working in this field for a couple of years, she joined Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in 1985. After a few years she was asked to set up a course for Operation Mobilisation (OM) to minister to the needs of Christian workers. She then joined a team from Medair (a Christian relief organisation) and worked for a time in Liberia and then, from September 1994, she worked in Rwanda, at the beginning of the genocide.

She was invited to join African Evangelistic Enterprise (AE) and since 1995 they began to run three-day workshops for Christian leaders in Rwanda on ‘The Role of the Church in the Healing of the Wounds of Ethnic Conflict’. After doing this workshop, people found themselves able to forgive and reconciliation started to take place.

During 1998 her work came under the cover of Mercy Ministries International, also called Le Rucher Ministries, because Le Rucher is the residential centre situated near Geneva, Switzerland.

In 1996 Africa Enterprise invited her to South Africa to run the same seminars in Kwa-Zulu Natal and as a result she also conducted workshops in the Western Cape and Gauteng. Getting the ministry launched in South Africa was much more difficult than in some other African countries. The reason seems to be the fact that groups in South Africa are not really in a “state of war”, and getting reconciled is not a matter of life and death. Handing the ministry over in South Africa took a while longer, because of people who didn’t really count the cost before making commitments. Reconciliatory work is not for sissies. But a core team has been trained and from 2004 until the end of 2005 thirteen workshops have been conducted in communities and churches all over the country. (Newsletter: Rhiannon’s Ramblings, May 2006)

The workshop is called: *Healing the Wounds of Ethnic Division*. In South Africa at this stage MMSA concentrates on bringing *Christians*, especially *leaders* from different ethnic and church backgrounds, together and, through a process, accompany them on a road of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation at the foot of the cross. It is not focussing

only on the pain experienced during the years of Apartheid and the struggle, but involves all traumatic experiences in the lives of participants.

One of the foundation stones of this Ministry is that the Cross of Jesus Christ stands in the centre. It is only through Jesus as the Pain Bearer (Isaiah 53:4, 5) that there can be healing. In a safe environment, participants are able to experience healing and develop new perspectives and attitudes. They are then equipped to influence others to demonstrate a new quality of relationship and bring hope to their communities. At present the workshops are being conducted in South Africa, Rwanda, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Wales. (Mercy Ministries Pamphlet)

When MMSA speaks of reconciliation, they do not mean a political process where people from different backgrounds work together. Neither do they regard reconciliation as a social issue whereby people work together in our country merely tolerating one another. People can work together, tolerating each other for years but still have deep pain and bitterness in their hearts towards one another, not being able to forgive one another for injustices of the past. When they speak of reconciliation, they mean the reconciliation which is read about in the Word in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and other Scriptures. This is true sustainable reconciliation where people open their hearts to one another and accept each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord, because they are first reconciled to God. Forgiveness and reconciliation are only the end products which occur at the closing of the process, after the people have received healing from pain and bitterness and anger which they might have harboured in their hearts for many years. The participants are taken through an entire process, of which each part builds on the previous, culminating in a climax at the end when they can celebrate their childhood of God, blessing and affirming one another in Christ.

The workshop is normally presented over a weekend from Friday night to Sunday afternoon or as the church or group's program allows it. Ample time is given for lecturing, story telling and interaction, small-group activities as well as a celebration time.

There are certain principles at the roots of this workshop:

1. *The church must be recognised as God's agent of healing and reconciliation.* In every situation, God is the God of hope (Romans 15:13), and He places His hope in His people (Ephesians 3:10-). In every nation His strategy is to use the Church. The Church is His agent of healing. But first it needs healing itself. That's why the strategy is to call together the Christian leaders from every denomination and ethnic group to spend three days together in God's presence, where they could encounter His healing love.
2. *Overcoming cultural barriers in expressing emotion.* Different cultures express their emotions differently. This can be a major obstacle in helping people towards healing. The only way is to focus on Jesus as the transcultural model of perfect humanity from whom all cultures could learn.
3. *Finding God in the midst of suffering.* 'Where was God in April 1994? Where was He on 11 Sept 2001?' These are some of the questions that introduce this part of the workshop. A safe place must be created where participants could own their doubts and voice their inner questions without fear of being condemned. Church leaders are encouraged to allow people to ask their questions, and to be merciful with those who doubt, seeking a deeper understanding of God's ways.
4. *Discovering Jesus as the Pain Bearer.* It's only when we are assured of God's intentions and feelings towards us that we can risk coming to Him with our pain. Jesus as pain- and sin Bearer must be discovered. It's not only our sins that are on the cross but also all the consequences of sin. In the workshops people are helped to look at the Lamb, Who is inviting them to offload their grief on to Him.

5. *The need to hear and be heard.* Before pouring out their pain to the Lord, participants also need to listen to one another's hearts. Small groups are used to create a place where they can share their stories. They are not only to listen to the facts but also to the pain in each other's heart.
6. *Understanding real forgiveness.* There is a need to understand Biblical forgiveness and its cost. Forgiving others requires the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb just as much as our receiving God's forgiveness.
7. *Discovering Jesus as Redeemer.* Another key is to discover Jesus as the Redeemer – not only of our sins but also of all our lives' tragedies. Holding on to the bigger picture of God being able to redeem everything gives hope to face the future.
8. *Exploring God's way of dealing with ethnic conflict.* Because ethnicity gives people a significant part of their identity, ethnic conflict is an attack on the core of their being. The workshop focuses on two ways of coming to a place of reconciliation:
 - *Discovering a new identity in God's Holy Nation*
 - *Standing in the gap with identificational repentance.*

Addendum 25 gives an overview of the topics that are covered during a workshop.

The researcher has had the opportunity to be involved in these workshops and can testify to dramatic changes that start occurring in the lives of people of different ethnic groups, but also amongst members of the same church, when they have learned to bring their pain and suffering to the cross of Jesus Christ and reach out a hand of forgiveness and reconciliation to others.

MMSA is experiencing the same problem as other organisations e.g. IHOM, namely that so few white people, and especially Afrikaners, are attending the workshops. Those who attend are normally members of multi-cultural churches, which invited MMSA to help them with reconciliation.

6.2.3 The Foundation for Church-led Restitution (FCR)

The Foundation for Church-led Restitution was born when one man received a prophetic word from God that believers in South Africa should be responsible for restitution and that the church will be the body that has to facilitate this process.

In February 2002, 13 Christians from diverse backgrounds started to meet regularly to discuss the South African Church's responsibility towards restitution. They agonised over the biblical basis for such action and its role for the healing of the divide between the poor/black church and the rich/white church. This culminated in the establishment of the FCR in 2003. (Robertson, 2005:132-134; www.restitution.org.za)

In communication with Deon Snyman, Director of FCR, it becomes clear that since its inception the Foundation focused on advocating the importance of church-led *restitution* within the South African society. The Foundation has as its Vision to see the South African church begin modelling biblical restitution that will bring justice and healing to the nation. The way it will be done, i.e. its Mission, is to be a catalyst for biblical restitution within the South African Church community.

This was primarily done through *workshops* where church members from all spheres of society around the country shared and discussed their personal stories and understanding of biblical restitution. Networking and partnerships have been formed. Conferences were held with a number of articles written for publication. Two farms donated by Charles Robertson helped with the establishment of the Foundation and the initiation of a bursary fund.

Presently various *restitution discussion groups* are meeting in Cape Town. Christians from the rich/white church and from the poor/black church meet monthly. Relationships

are being formed and personal stories are being shared. Healthy debates are leading to practical ideas on implementing restitution.

The Restitution Foundation is working towards establishing a church-led restitution people's movement and sees its future role as a catalyst within the broader church community. Specific focus areas were identified as cornerstones for such a movement:

- Prayer.
- Discussion groups.
- Job creation.
- Housing for the homeless.
- Land reform.
- Restitution opportunities around the 2010 Soccer World Cup.
- Rendering of professional services.
- Quality education for disadvantaged.
- Advocacy for a just South African economy.
- Propagating restitution.

Task teams are being established for each focus area with a mandate to:

- Identify restitution initiatives.
- Establish partnerships.
- Mobilise the church community.

In order to realise these focus areas, FCR's strategy is to establish task teams for each focus area. Task team members will meet bimonthly to develop and implement specific business plans with measurable outcomes for each focus area and raise the necessary financial support needed. Each task team will be responsible to identify existing restitution related initiatives within a specific focus area, to establish partnerships with these initiatives and to mobilise the church community to participate in these initiatives. (www.restitution.org.za)

Robertson holds a belief that "restitution can be applied in a spirit of asking forgiveness and charitableness and with an awareness of the numerous wrong deeds of the past

against others. It is the beginning of a process to rectify the sins of the past” (Robertson, 2005:104).

According to the FCR it is very important to get all believers of all races of all church denominations involved in this Church-led restitution. All in all there are three areas of involvement: the givers, the receivers and the facilitators. Thus the people who are involved have equally important roles to play. Immediately it brings us to the realisation that not all people will accept this church-led restitution. From many corners there will be opposition, but these reactions must not stand in the way of restitution. Let us look more closely at this process as Robertson explains it (Robertson, 2005: 105-112).

The givers: The FCR is of opinion that all believers, irrespective of their back-ground or financial situation, must be motivated to become givers. There is no indication of how much or what must be given because giving has to do with the attitude of the heart. Hand in hand with the giving process is the idea of development of relationships between the giver and the receiver. If this is not happening, the whole process can develop into a system of paternalism.

The receivers: These are the people who are in need and suffered some injustice and can deliver proof of that. It is important to mention that those who believe they ought to get something must be helped not to have unrealistic expectations.

The facilitators: As facilitators we have the local congregations, because the church is still seen as the most reliable facilitator irrespective of all the complaints about the role of the church in society. FCR has identified five areas from those mentioned above, which the churches, as facilitators should focus on:

- Prayer for and teachings about prayer for restitution.
- Participation in discussion-groups. Believers of different ethnic and culture groups can come together and discuss openly and honestly issues about restitution.
- Healing of the wounds that givers still have because of things from the past that they were involved in.
- Help for people to experience again or for the first time their human dignity. This is one of the greatest needs in our country and people

need to be set free and trained to be human again on different levels i.e. spiritually, socially, emotionally, psychologically and economically.

- Establishing of long-term relationships between giver and receiver of a restitution gift.

When we look at these things we cannot but say that the church as facilitator has an immense task on its shoulders in the whole quest for restitution. Especially in South Africa where the reality tells us that it's normally the white churches that have the riches and the black churches that are lacking in the necessary means for day to day living.

6.3 DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

6.3.1 Introduction

As the researcher is working in the field of reconciliation, he has come to the conclusion that he harboured a few important questions in his mind about some major issues. Why do the Afrikaans Churches not really want to get involved in a process of reconciliation in our country? Is it only the Afrikaans Churches or do the English Churches also struggle with this? It seems as if there is a strong apathy from the majority of Afrikaners to get out of their self imposed prison and start living in a free country as part of the 'rainbow nation'. The researcher experienced that there is an atmosphere of growing frustration or even hatred building up amongst the rank and file of white citizens and it becomes more and more visible in the Afrikaans Churches, especially as regards the possible re-uniting of the DRC and the URCSA. The researcher also sensed this in conversations with some ministers of the URCSA that the "people on the ground" can't really see the necessity of such a venture. As has been discussed in previous chapters the Afrikaans Churches came through a difficult time after the dismantling of Apartheid. It was a time of introspection, confusion, disillusionment, denial and a feeling of being uprooted. Meiring mentioned the work of Kübler-Ross, renowned worldwide for her work in the field of trauma counselling, and came to the conclusion that the process

people are going through in any traumatic experience can also be applied to the Afrikaner. Kübler-Ross said that patients, who are confronted with severe trauma, go through certain stages, which function as defence mechanisms. These stages are denial; anger; negotiation and rationalisation; deep depression; acceptance. In one way or another, the Afrikaners are going through this. Furthermore the situation of escalating violence, corruption, criminal activities, land reforms, etc. is not making it easier for the Afrikaner minority. And then there is the quest and urge for reconciliation ...and this seems too much for them (Meiring, 1999:112-114).

There is an aloofness of many white people as soon as they hear that one is working in a cross-cultural situation, especially in the field of reconciliation. Rev. David Botha also mentioned that he came across that as facilitator of IHOM (See par 6.4.1). The researcher has tried to motivate church members and even ministers to attend workshops of IHOM, but as soon as some of them heard that Fr Micheal Lapsley is involved, they were turned off because of his involvement in the struggle during the Apartheid years. The congregation where the researcher worshipped invited him once to talk about reconciliation and quite a number of congregants walked out of the service when he shared his testimony and his alliance with the ANC. To others it was a blessing, but the question that the church board asked afterwards was whether it is worth the trouble to invite a person like him to talk about reconciliation, because during the days following the church service, there were lots of complaints. Some felt that they can't see the necessity of making extra attempts towards reconciliation as it seems that it is coming only from the white population group. This is but one example of many where we experience that the average Afrikaans church member does not have the desire, and don't even see the urgency, for reconciliation. The researcher visited a friend, and some of his Afrikaner friends were present as well, with their guns strapped to their sides. The whole evening the discussions centred on the problems in the country and how they would love to use those guns – and they were all Afrikaners and members of Afrikaans Churches. How do you engage such church members in events of reconciliation? And how do you present the need so that they, and there are thousands like them in our country, will see

the necessity of a changed attitude and a willingness to get reconciled with God, their fellowman and themselves?

During workshops on reconciliation people have the opportunity to talk about their pain. The researcher has listened to many younger black and coloured people experiencing an inward resentment towards white people, and the previous white government, for things that happened to their parents and grandparents as the result of the policy of Apartheid. It is only after they have realised that many white people also harboured pain because of these things, and even because of what is happening currently in the country, e.g. RDP (Reconstruction and Development Program) and young white people leaving the country, etc. that they are willing to forgive and to start working together for a better future for all the peoples of South Africa.

6.3.2 Researcher's own position

6.3.2.1 Introduction

As a Christian I believe that true, lasting reconciliation is not possible if it is not founded in what Jesus Christ has done on the cross. I believe in what Alex Boraine said that reconciliation in the Christian religion is not earned, but is a gift from God. All that is expected is that it must be accepted, because nobody deserves it. When one is reconciled to God it always involves reconciliation with one's fellowman and in the reconciliation process there are "a number of steps that take place: confession, repentance, restitution and forgiveness. The focus in traditional Christian religion is very much on the covenant between God and the individual, and the bridge to that relationship is Jesus Christ. At its best, reconciliation involves sacrifice and commitment" (Boraine, 2000:360).

To be reconciled to somebody else means, for me, that I must know who I am, that I am rooted in God and His Word because He is the one who reconciled men with himself in Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17-22) If this is true of me, then I must, first of all, make sure that the other person also has a relationship with Jesus Christ. Only then can our hearts really connect and is true reconciliation possible.

Reconciliation doesn't occur on one level only, because, as mentioned in Chapter 1, four relationships had been distorted if not totally broken during the Fall of man: The relations between God and man, man with himself, man and man, man and nature. In each of these relationships it is necessary for the church to have a clear picture of what is meant by reconciliation and, from this, develop a definite strategy for how it is going to accompany its congregants in the reconciliation process i.e. what is its role and what will its role be in the future. It is also important that the church empowers its congregants to get involved in acts of reconciliation and take responsibility for it.

6.3.2.2 *Truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation*

In this whole process there must be the ongoing quest for truth and justice with all that it entails. To do this it will mean that the church will have to change many of its beliefs and traditions. In order for this to happen it would require more preaching from the pulpits regarding God's requirements for truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation. This then will require that preachers/church-leaders would have to ensure that their message is focused on the practice of being a Christian everyday – and not only on Sundays. I think many of the reasons why churches do not have a clear picture of reconciliation, and their role in the process, is because of a wrong or distorted church view. (Research Problem 1) What is church? Who is church? Do congregants (and for that matter, church goers) understand that the Church is the Body of Christ and that each local church and its members are part of this Body? So, when we talk about the church and its responsibilities in reconciliation, it boils down to the role of each church member's role. This will challenge not only the church view but also the worldview of many church members. It is my sincere opinion that truth, forgiveness, justice/restitution and reconciliation are not something that is taught only, but is the living out of an everyday intimate relationship with the Lord. I firmly believe that if this is not going to be the pattern for how the churches, and especially the Afrikaans Churches, will live in the future, we can talk about reconciliation without getting anywhere. We in South Africa must realise that it is not only a matter of reconciliation between black and white, but also amongst the different black ethnic groups in the country. When

I talk to people from the different ethnic groups, it becomes clear that in the political realm, a stressful situation is developing between two large ethnic groups, the Zulu's and the Xhosa's. I am not so sure if our reconciliation efforts are focusing on these situations as well.

Truth:

As has been showed previously, one of the main objections from Afrikaans Churches to the TRC was about the question: *What is truth?* Now Christians know that it is not a new question, because it was the same question Pontius Pilate posed to Jesus' words "...for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of the truth listens to me." (John 18:37, 38)

Boraine focused our attention on the TRC-report which stated that there are four kinds of truth: (1) Objective of factual truth, which in South Africa's case had to do with things that were revealed as a result of public findings and particular incidents and specific people. (2) Personal or narrative truth, where victims/people's own stories and oral traditions play a major part. (3) Social or dialogical truth, where the experience plays a role and that can be unearthed through interaction, discussions and debate. (4) Healing and restorative truth, which means that the 'truth' which is uncovered, must contribute to the reparation of the damage of the past and it must help with prevention of the same damage in the future (Boraine 2000: 288- 291).

I believe that truth can be a very subjective concept because it also has to do with the person's /organisation's/church's life philosophy and worldview. And that again depends on a lot of influences from all corners of the spectrum. Even if the question is asked of the church regarding a certain matter (or dogma), a myriad of answers will be given e.g. the different English Churches will see this as the truth, the Afrikaans Churches will say that is the truth, the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches will each have their own view and then we haven't even began to hear the views of all the African Independent Churches. So what is truth? Ten years after the TRC there is still a lot of "truth" that hasn't be told with regards to the old government system; but what about speaking "truth" in the current situation in the country? The big question for me is: "Truth" according to whom?

As a Christian I tend more and more to change the question to: *Who is the truth?* This changes the whole issue of truth because Jesus Christ Himself said:

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) And later He spoke of the Holy Spirit and said: *“...and (the Father) will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth”* and *“But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.” (John 14:15; 16:13)* So, when we talk about truth, we talk about a Person and the relationship with that Person.

Wouldn't it have been something, during the years of Apartheid and the time of the TRC, if the people who were involved in atrocities had spoken from a basis of an intimate relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ? I know that many of the witnesses, victims and perpetrators, at the TRC said that they were Christians, but so have more than 70% of South Africans indicated on the State Census the past couple of years – with no change in the situation in our country. It's even getting worse day by day.

Forgiveness:

It has already been said, quoting Bonhoeffer, that reconciliation is not cheap. The reason? Forgiveness as pre-requisite for reconciliation is so costly. To forgive is one of the hardest and most costly things in the world. What other model is there for us on how to forgive than the model we have of how God forgave us. For Him to forgive us, cost Him the death of his Son, Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Taking up this model in our situation means that someone has to pay the price, someone has to take responsibility for sin against humans and the pain inflicted by that sin.

If it is difficult to give forgiveness, it is just as difficult to ask for forgiveness, because it asks of one to repent of wrongs (sin?) against others. It asks of one to exhibit one's brokenness before God and openness before fellowmen. And I believe that is too costly for a proud people like the Afrikaner. Often we hear the remark: *How many times must we still ask for forgiveness?* This comes mostly from the Afrikaners and certain groupings within the Afrikaans Churches. *Must we still be made the skunk of the world?* I believe that's why so few Afrikaners attend inter-racial gatherings, whether cultural or Christian. It is because of fear of being pointed at. The result of this is that nobody wants to take the responsibility to stand before the world, as Jesus did on the cross, and become sin on behalf of your people group. Then, when a person like Mr Adriaan Vlok did that,

what ought to be the everyday way of life of the individual Christian and Christian Church, the majority say ‘Too little, too late’, instead of following the example in his or her circle of influence. From my own experience in the field of reconciliation, I agree with Alex Boraine who made the comment that during the era of the TRC, “the willingness to forgive, to start again, cut across men and women, black and white” (Boraine, 2000: 354). But, I want to state categorically that if we, as Afrikaners and the Afrikaans Churches, are not going to ask for forgiveness from the people of South Africa and extend unconditional forgiveness to others, we can forget about lasting reconciliation in this country. There are enough Scripture references on what forgiveness is and what it is not. I believe it would do church members good to look at those again.

Justice/restitution/reparation:

These concepts are not new in the Christian language but it has been brought to the front by activists during the years of struggle for a free South Africa – especially the word *justice*. Although the idea of *restitution* was, for many years, and still is, used in the context of evangelism and revival, it has actually, with the idea of *reparation*, come to the fore during the time of the TRC, because of the work of the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, as well as through the work of The Foundation of Church led Restitution (FCR) (See par 6.2.3). Antjie Krog made the comment that “...reconciliation and reparation go hand in hand. The one cannot be without the other. If people don’t get reparation, they won’t forgive. If people are not forgiven, they won’t offer reparation” (Antjie Krog, 2002:130). Desmond Tutu quotes from the TRC report as he said “without adequate reparation and rehabilitation measures, there can be no healing and reconciliation, either on an individual or a community level ...In addition ... reparation is essential to counterbalance amnesty....The Government should thus accept responsibility for reparation” (Tutu, 2000:58).

To understand the full extent of this, it is necessary to look more closely at the concept of *justice*. According to *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, the word *justice* has the primary meaning: (a) right and fair behaviour or treatment (b) the quality of being fair or reasonable ... When one thinks about the situation in South Africa at the moment it is difficult to be unbiased when thinking about justice. From the black population there is the cry for justice over the past, especially on the issue of restitution and therefore the

land claims. From the white people there is the cry for justice because of reverse racism and the Redevelopment program of the Government, which resulted in many white people losing their jobs. There is a saying doing the rounds: *The most terrible thing that can happen to you in South Africa today is to be a white male*. As a result of this situation, many skilled white people are leaving the country for countries like Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Canada and the USA. This leads me to the idea of emphasising the distinction between *retributive justice* and *restorative justice*. The chief goal of *retributive justice* is to focus on punishment. Boraine is quoting Tony Marshall who explained that “restorative *justice* is about restoring victims, restoring offenders and restoring communities (Boraine 2000:426). Regarding restorative justice Desmond Tutu said that:

...the central concern is not retribution or punishment, but in the spirit of *ubuntu* the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured in his offence (Tutu 1999:54,55).

I agree with Tutu when he said that when we make efforts to work for healing (of memories and hurts) for forgiveness and reconciliation, then restorative justice has been served. But I am afraid that we still have a long way to go in South Africa, and particularly in the white community, to reach this goal.

Reconciliation:

I want to take the most common meaning of the Greek word *katalasso* = *to change from enmity to friendship*, as basis for this discussion. I believe we use too much theological and even political/social jargon when we speak of reconciliation, so that the average church members get lost in it all. The question that I grapple with is: *How can we help the people in the pew, the churchgoer, the person who says he/she is a Christian, to go out and start ‘doing reconciliation’?* Yes, I agree with Meiring when he said, inter alia, that:

Reconciliation and truth go hand in hand; reconciliation requires a deep, honest confession – and a willingness to forgive; justice and reconciliation are two sides of the same coin; for reconciliation to happen, a deep commitment is needed (Meiring, 2002:286, 287).

I want to stress the last few words of the above quotation: *for reconciliation to happen, a deep commitment is needed*. The church, and for the sake of this study, the Afrikaans Churches, need to commit themselves to reconciliation on *all* levels of the community in which they serve. Like revival, reconciliation can also become messy and it needs people who are not afraid of getting dirty, in the event of working for that for which our Lord Jesus Christ has given his life – to reconcile people with God and with one another and He has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (Romans 5:1-12; Ephesians 2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Bosch’s comment (Ch 5) is of importance here. He said that repentance and conversion (which are the basis of reconciliation- R) usually touch those things in our lives like our standing in society, ego, self image, etc., the things without which, we think, we cannot function. But in the course of reconciliation, one has to ‘die to self’, forget one’s ‘pedigree’, like a Paul.

6.3.3. Suggested Model

It is important to take note that this model is suggested for use in the Church, whether English or Afrikaans, but since this study concentrates on the Afrikaans Churches, the researcher had them in mind while developing this.

The researcher suggests that this model be worked through in the form of a workshop, consisting of different sessions, in a non-threatening situation. The best way may be to think and work together in small-groups so that participants can experience that they are in a safe place where they can share with one another without fear. By working through this, congregants, including the church leadership and especially the minister, can be empowered to become involved in reconciliation. (Research Problem 2) Experience with these types of workshops has shown that *the role of the leader is of utmost importance. If the leader is afraid to be open and vulnerable, it can create tension amongst the participants and they will not participate whole-heartedly during discussions and other activities*. In many churches there is still the problem that congregants see their minister as being more exalted than the ordinary members are and expect from him super-human qualities. The researcher thinks that the most important thing to remember is that reconciliation must become a way of life. It’s not a once-and-for-all event or seminar or

workshop, but an attitude of the mind, because at the foundation of it all is an intimate relationship with God, the Creator and Sustainer of life – of all people.

The researcher suggests that the following must be included in a plan that must be worked through by the participants. Ample time must be allowed for discussions and intra- and inter-personal reflections. If the participants could come from different ethnic backgrounds it will be much more rewarding to work together to accomplish a common goal: that of coming to know one another in a safe place and to get “the feeling” of one another’s mindset and even culture. The researcher thinks this is one of the major problems in our country that we have been living together for many centuries but still don’t know one another’s culture and way of thinking.

1. Background: It will be beneficial to have a few short small-group discussions on the issues of truth, forgiveness, justice and restitution and reconciliation. This will depend on the age groups represented. Not many people, especially some white people, have taken much note of the discussions regarding these topics in the debate during the time of the TRC. So it would be a good idea for people to get some clarity in their own minds of what they think regarding these. The following questions may be included to stimulate the discussions: *What do you understand under the concept of reconciliation? What do you think needs to be done, or needs to be known, for reconciliation to take place? What is truth? Are there different kinds of truth or is there only one, ultimate truth? Would you consider a question like: Who is truth? How would you define the concept of forgiveness? Would you say it is easy to forgive? What about asking somebody’s forgiveness? Would you say that asking and giving forgiveness is a prerequisite for reconciliation? Do you think we lived in a just society prior to 1994? What do you think regarding the situation today? How would you evaluate the next statement: Restitution/reparation is absolutely necessary before true reconciliation can be achieved?* These or similar questions can be discussed in alternate groups if there is not enough time for every group to discuss them all. In the end feedback from the groups is important, because it will give an indication of how much the participants have grown in their understanding of the current issues in the country.

2. **Biblical basis:** Christians can go to no other source than the Bible to find a basis for profound reconciliation. It is important that the church must first of all ask what God's view is on reconciliation before we ask the world. Material from Chapter 1 par.1.7.2, and others, can be used as background. Both the Old- and New Testament's witness on reconciliation needs to be discussed. One suggestion is that participants in small groups can discuss some passages from the Old- and New Testament. From Old Testament passages such as Genesis 1:24-28; Exodus 32:31f; Lev 17:11f; 2 Chronicles 7:14f; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 61; Mica 6:1; Daniel 9:3; etc., we can deduct that disturbed relations have profound social and cosmic implications. Reconciliation follows after the acceptance of accountability, expressed in a confession without 'buts' or 'because of circumstances'.

New Testament passages that can be included in the discussion are Matthew 5:23-24; 18:21f; Romans 3:25; 5:5-15; Ephesians 2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Colossians 1:20f, etc. During the discussions it may come to the fore that the gospel asks from us to be defenceless, broken and naked before others.

Following this, it is suggested that a thorough discussion of 2 Corinthians 5:17 be held, beginning with the concept of the '*new man*'. Attention must be drawn to the fact that the regenerated man in Jesus Christ is no longer living according to the laws of the Kingdom of Darkness, but that Jesus Christ has brought him out of that and placed him into the Kingdom of Light (Colossians 1: 13-14) and must now live according to the principles of the Kingdom of Light (God). These principles include humility, obedience, repentance, forgiveness, dying to self, openness and brokenness, servanthood, endurance, faith, prayer, etc. There are enough Scripture passages that underwrite these principles.

When these few concepts are understood, it becomes clear that the Christian cannot live without a clear understanding of what God's idea is about reconciliation. From here on it is now relevant to look at the broken relationships, as mentioned earlier. Each of these will comprise a separate session of $\pm 1 - 1\frac{1}{2}$ hours..

3. **Healing of the broken relationship between God and man:** It is good to start with God and man and the broken relationship between them. Starting with God, questions such as: *Who is God? Can God be seen? How do we know there is a God?* In

discussion groups a few minutes can be allowed to let each person make a drawing of how he/she sees God. It will probably be one of His attributes, but that doesn't matter. It's not necessary to go into any dogmatic discussion of God, but it will be good to point out a few of His attributes as He has revealed it in the Scriptures. Through this the people will come to have, once again, or for the first time, a vision of who God really is. *God is supreme and sovereign; God communicates with man; God is omnipresent and omniscient – everywhere all the time and He knows everything; God is omnipotent – all-powerful; God is holy and righteous; God is loving, merciful and gracious; God is faithful and immutable – He never changes.* Some Scripture verses that can be used as a starting point are: 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 147:4, 5; John 4:24; Revelation 1:8; Col 1:17; Isaiah 9:6; Romans 8:15-17, etc.

Man: God, of his free will, created man. Nobody said He had to do it. He just said: *“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1: 26-27 NIV).* Some questions that can be included in the discussion are: *Why do you think God made you the way you are? Since you are made in God's image, how will your life reflect Him? What would you say is your greatest need? What happened to this beautifully created being? What would you do when you find yourself caught in making a mistake in front of others? What do you think is the worst thing about disobeying God?* The purpose of these questions is to get the participants to a point where they understand what went wrong in the relationship between God and man.

God had created man good, but disobedience towards God resulted in the breaking of the relationship (Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 1:24ff; 5:12-21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 2:1-3). Since sin came into this world through one man, redemption has been worked through one Man, Jesus Christ and through Him God worked, in his grace, reconciliation with Himself. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:1-21) Because of this work of Christ, man received a new identity: no longer an orphan but God's child (John 1:12); no longer a rebel but justified (Romans 5:1); no longer separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35); salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14), etc. Man also has a responsibility and that is to accept it, to believe that Jesus Christ died for his sins and, by doing that, he

is grafted into the tree of life, Jesus Christ, and becomes a child of God. (John 1:12; 3:16; 1 John 5: 11-13)

3. *Reconciliation of man with himself:* It is important that the participants must have time to think about their own lives. It is suggested that each person draws a time-line of his own life and marks, if possible with dates, events that happened during their lifetime that have had an impact on their way of thinking and on their behaviour. It will be good if the leader of the seminar/workshop takes the lead by using his own time-line as an example. It is of the utmost importance that each participant must be honest with himself and his situation. This is the only way truth can be served. We are living in an age where there is no time left to beat around the bush as to who we are and where we came from. It is of no use to try and please people, but when you are alone with yourself, it is a different story. Discussion of each timeline in the small group will help participants to voice things that they most probably have never talked about before. Further questions might be posed for reflection. *How do you see and think about yourself? Are you satisfied with what you see and think?*

It is important to show participants that there are different dimensions in each one of us: The heart/spirit in the centre; Emotions; Will; Mind and Physical body. The researcher here uses the concept that Neil Anderson followed in his book, *Victory over darkness, 1990 (Reprint 1996)* when he tried to help people to become whole. With the fall of man each of these aspects was affected, which in essence has an effect on all life's faculties: faith, reason, relations, work, sexuality, etc. and these need also to be brought in line with the 'new identity' – they need reconciliation. Therefore it is important to spend some time thinking through these dimensions and allow the Holy Spirit to work in you for the healing of each.

Another important suggestion is to introduce the concepts of *openness and brokenness and dying to self because* it is of utmost importance to understand these in order to start seeking reconciliation with fellowmen.

Openness and brokenness: Is there a difference between these two concepts? The researcher would like to define it as follows: *Openness is to not live behind a mask, not*

building walls around you, but to be transparent. This bring accountability to the fore; no more 'beating around the bush'. It means to be open to people around you, which doesn't mean that your deepest secrets must always be made known – there is a place for that – but that people will know exactly where they stand with you. Brokenness is an ongoing, constant way of life – a moment-by-moment lifestyle of agreeing with God about the true condition of my heart and life as He knows it to be. Thus brokenness is to be open before God as David said in Psalm 139:1 “O Lord, You have searched me and known me.” And in v23 he said: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties” (NKJV). Today it is very difficult for people to think in categories of pain, mourning, humbleness. No, our culture is obsessed with feeling good, looking good. We want everything to be as painless as possible. The researcher once read in a gym: “No gain without pain”, but today we want the gain without the pain. This is also true when we think about the majority of Afrikaners and reconciliation. David understood that God was not looking for religious acts or devout acts. In Psalm 51:17 he wrote: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise”(NKJV). God wants a humble, contrite heart and if this does not become part of our daily lives as Christians we will have a difficult time in working for lasting reconciliation. Families will keep on living separated from one another until fathers, mothers and children have been broken and when this happen churches will again be the vibrant witness and instruments for revival and reconciliation in our country. Maybe this is the crux of the problem for the Afrikaans Churches in their struggle with efforts of reconciliation. (Problem 3)

Many believers are afraid to think about the concept of brokenness because they think it means that you must walk around sad and gloomy. There is the idea that broken people never smile and enjoy a joke. In her beautiful book, *Brokenness*, author Nancy Leigh DeMoss makes the comment that brokenness is not a feeling or an emotion, but rather a choice that one makes to live a life in total commitment to God – “the absolute surrender of my will to the will of God...submitting myself to His direction and will in my life” (DeMoss, 2002: 53).

Dying to self: Most of us struggle with the ‘Me-Myself-I’ syndrome, which causes much trouble in relationships with others. I believe that one of the problems amongst Christians is that we tend to stand too much on our ‘rights’ á la the whole issue about Human Rights. If we will only remember that in the Kingdom of God we don’t have rights but privileges, it will be easier for us to accept one another and to live reconciled lives. To die to self is a concept that is found throughout the New Testament – just look at passages like Mark 8:35; 10:29-31; Matthew 19:16-21; Romans 6; Romans 12:1,2; Gal 2:19,20; Philippians 3:7-11;etc. There is the story of the theological professor who wanted to make this concept very clear to his class. He took them to a nearby cemetery and let them gather around one of the grand tombstones. Then he told one of the students to curse the person in the grave with all the language skills that he had. After a while he asked the student to start praising the person. When he was finished, the professor asked the class: “When the person in the grave was cursed, what did he do?” The obvious answer was: Nothing! “And when he was praised, what did he then do?” The same answer: Nothing! The lesson to learn from this little story is that when a person is dead, he cannot react to anything. So *to die to self* means just that – to be dead to anything that comes to you from people, whether it is a curse or praise. The only thing that matters is what God has to say about you.

The researcher believes that if this will be our attitude as Christians, and especially as members of the Afrikaans Churches, much more will happen regarding our relationships with our fellow-men.

4. *Reconciliation between man and man:* Where do we find the necessity for reconciliation in relationships? Everywhere. Whether it is in the family, the workplace, society, the church, etc. In our country there is a need for reconciliation in all the above spheres, but especially between the different ethnic groups. As mentioned above it is not only conflict between white and black, but also amongst the different black ethnic groups. The way to go about helping people resolve their conflicts is not so easy. There is a wholehearted belief that every situation has its spark of hope and our task, as Church, is to help fan that little flame into something that will change the face of our country for the better.

Nowadays the concept of time-lines and drawings is a well-known method of helping people to come into contact with their fear or pain. A suggestion is that during the discussion of the present topic, participants should receive a big piece of paper to draw his or her life story in pictures, especially as it relates to conflict areas – whether family, church or race related, etc. An important concept to understand is that it is not so easy for people during the story-telling time to open up because of intrinsic fear of “what are the people going to say about me?” That’s why it is important that participants understand the whole concept of openness, brokenness and dying to self. Here already is a situation where they can practice it and the leader must point this out to them. People also fear being judged or victimised – especially the Afrikaners. In the small group these drawings can be shared with one another, or if the person does not feel safe enough in the group, he or she can share with the leader.

After the small groups shared their life drawings there must be time for quiet contemplation on what was heard. Then a time of sharing in the big group can help to bring the whole concept of reconciliation with one another into the spotlight by giving a time for confessions towards others in the group – especially if it is an ethnically mixed group. The leader should help others by taking the initiative in this. Assist participants to confess and ask forgiveness for own sin or negligence but also to ‘stand in the gap’ for others of their group. If a person is confronted with personal sin(s) in his life, let him write it on a piece of paper to deal with later. This works to the respect of confidentiality and building of trust.

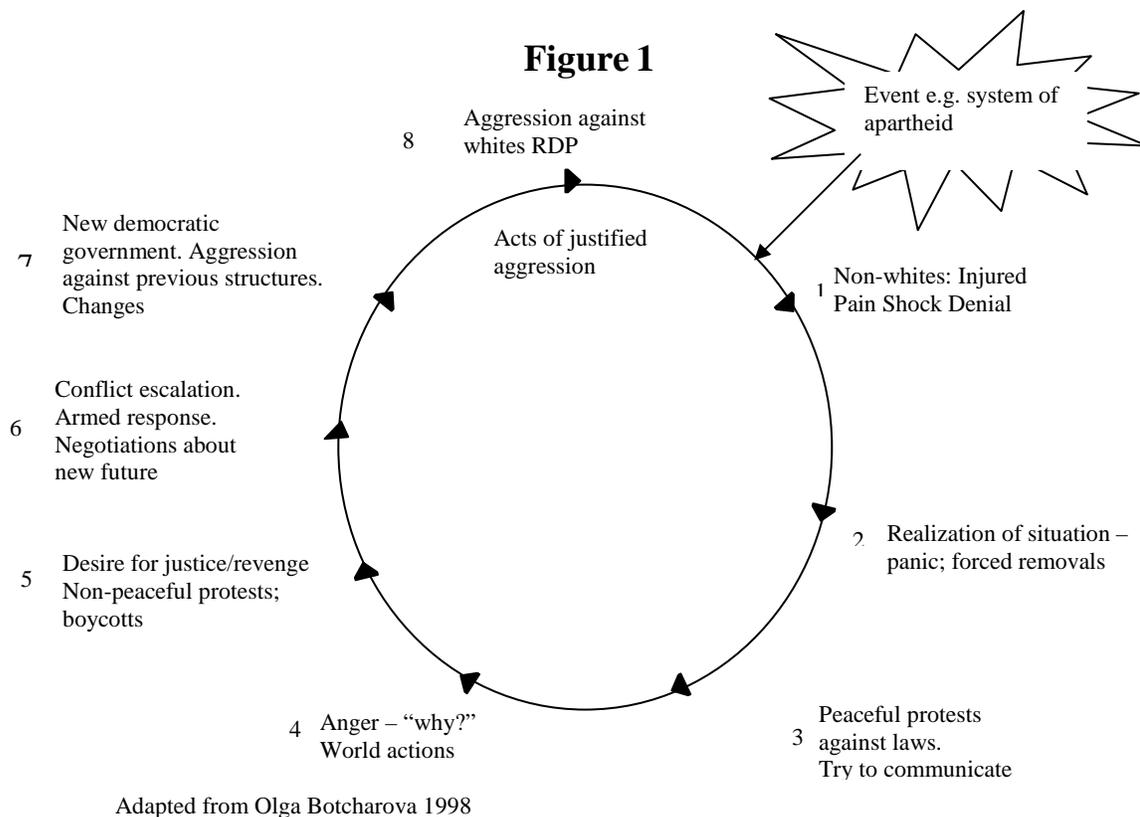
During the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, the researcher was, amongst other things, a lecturer at a Mission organisation’s Bible School. One day during a counselling period, and this was after the work of the TRC has been completed, one of the black students, a man of 27, told the class that he was part of a group who were involved in throwing stones at people who had been ‘necklaced’. The student group was small and he used this method of allowing each one to mention something from the Apartheid period as they remembered it. He was astounded to experience something of the pain in those students. Scenes of violence, midnight raids on houses, etc. were deeply engraved in the minds of those young men. How is it possible to ignore the hurts and pain against one’s family and

ethnic group? May be this is the reason why white South Africans shy away from opportunities to hear these and other stories? Is this the reason why so few white people attended the hearings of the TRC? He believes we, as white people do not want to be confronted with our own fears and pain. We believe we can ‘cope’ – until someone “cracks”, and then we want to apply some ointment.

It is important that participants understand the origin of the fear and hurts they carry with them. These will emerge from their drawings and it may be handled in the group or individually, as the case may be. It is therapeutic to talk about it, but then it must be dealt with, and my experience is to lead people by bringing all their fears, hurts, pain, and personal sin in prayer to Christ. He not only became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and died for the sin of the world, but 1 Peter 2:24 told us that we were also healed by His wounds. (Cf. Isaiah 53:5). There are different ways to make this experience something to remember: some people nail all the papers with hurts and sins written on them, to a wooden cross; others put them in a bucket and burn them, etc. The researcher suggests that a person should have two lists with him (if necessary) one with personal sins and the other with personal fears and pain. Take the ‘sin-list’ and let the people confess these one by one to the Lord. As an act of accepting His forgiveness, write across the list the words of either 1 John 1:7b “...and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies me from all sin.” or 1 John 1:9: “If I confess my sin, He is faithful and just and will forgive me my sins and purify me from all unrighteousness”. (Underlining words make it more personal).

Another suggestion is that notice be taken of the work of Olga Botcharova, who has a good reputation for solving conflict- and reconciliation problems amongst former enemies. It can help us to understand not only what is going on inside me, but also in the other person who seeks reconciliation. In two articles, *Implementation of Track Two Diplomacy: Developing a Model of Forgiveness* (Botcharova, 2001:279-304) and *At the Fork in the Road: Trauma healing*, by Nancy G. Sider (Conciliation Quarterly, Spring 2001; Vol. 20, No 2. Internet Services), it is pointed out that one of the important features of success with this program, is the fact that it has to do with unofficial interaction between people from different groups to help them to develop a process of healing and

reconciliation. (See Addendum 26 for the outline). The researcher finds it useful to take note of the diagram that was developed to demonstrate how natural human responses to being hurt and to injustices might motivate people to move from being victims to becoming perpetrators. This cycle illustrates the victim's suffering on the one hand but on the other it signifies the dangerous progression to violence where the victim becomes the perpetrator. The researcher has adapted, with gratitude, the two diagrams that Botcharova uses as illustrations, for use in his own model. Eight steps are recognised in this diagram (Figure 1) which, to a certain extent, are similar to those identified by Kübler-Ross, as noted previously.

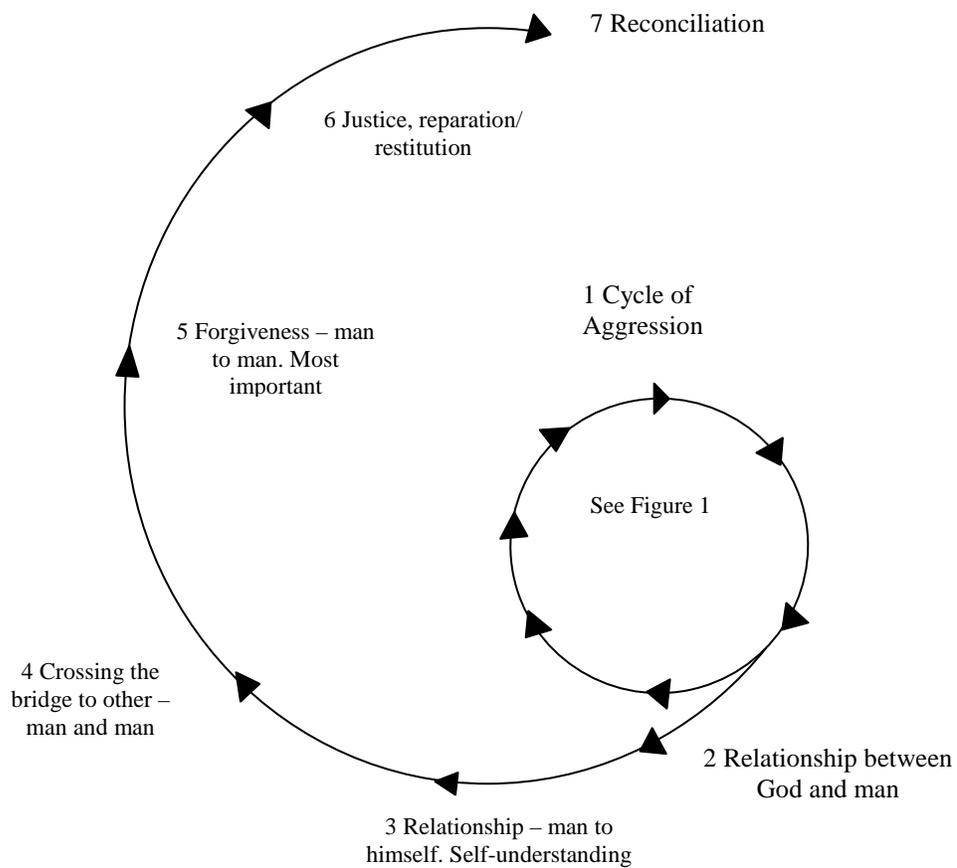


Circle to show natural human responses to hurt.

This closed circle is a reflection of typical reactions in the life of a victim (in this case ethnic groups in South Africa) in the ‘journey’ to become the victimiser/perpetrator. It should, however, be understood that not all victims would become aggressors and that not all conflicts turn into violence. Participants are challenged to help break this cycle. It is suggested that participants reflect silently on the choices they have made as victims of

conflict. This can be a time of deep inner conflict and remorse as well as an aid on the road to true forgiveness and healing, which leads to reconciliation. This is shown in Figure 2 where the closed circle, as seen in Fig 1, may lead towards a natural revenge journey, while the open circle (spiral) portrays the way out of the vicious cycle towards a road of reconciliation.

Figure 2



(Adapted from Olga Botcharova 1998)

Closed and open circles to show the fork in the road.

Some general guidelines as we consider the two circles:

1. *Trauma/Conflict healing is both a decision and a process.* The initial choice involves the decision to either move toward healing or stay in the react/revenge closed circle. It is also a process, in that it entails our being patient with ourselves (and others, where a whole community is traumatised) as we go through this journey.
2. *Trauma healing is not one directional.* It is clearly not as linear as a person's simple time-line. A person alternates, rather than follows a tidy progression from one stage to the next. It is possible that some people can move to the open circle and then find themselves back in the closed circle, again having a desire for revenge.
3. *The key is to know that a choice is available.* If you are in the trauma experience it is difficult to heal if you stay in the closed circle of trauma, anger and wanting to engage in violence. You have a choice to remain in the closed circle or to move out to the open circle – a choice to possibly becoming a healthy individual again.

Some of the questions that can emerge during this time are: Why must one let go and move to the outer circle? Why forgive or even think about it? How do we remember and tell our story so as not to be re-traumatised? What lessons can be learned – what should be taught to young people growing up in a world that has known, and still produces incomprehensible patterns of violence and torture? Would it be better to shield young people from those patterns until they grow up? What about the young people of South Africa, where you still have the vulture of racism hovering above? What about the escalating violence and the ever widening gap between rich and poor?

These, and others, are difficult questions that don't have simple answers. It is therefore absolutely vital for faith communities, and especially the Christian church, to get out of the ditches and create opportunities for people to grapple with their past and past atrocities. White people especially must be assisted to understand their own role in the situation in South Africa.

The concept of forgiveness is at the core of the model and is seen as the culmination of a healing process that makes it possible for the parties in conflict to move forward to

reconciliation. Without it there is little hope for a sustainable peace, but achieving it is a huge challenge. When you come to the Fork in the Road, what are you going to do? Take the wrong turn and keep on travelling in an inner, suffocating circle, or take the turn onto the divergent road to healing and to be set free in a reconciled society?

The researcher believes that it would be good if the participants could, as a symbol of their understanding of reconciliation and their new found willingness to reconcile with one another, partake in a short ceremony, perhaps lighting a candle or having Holy Communion together. The most important thing however is to have a commitment from everyone to go out and live a life that speaks of being a new person with new values and a new vigour to reach out to others around them.

5. *Reconciliation between man and nature/environment:* When one considers this topic, it is not so easy to assert what is meant by ‘nature’. Many concepts have been used in the past, and are still used today, to express what is meant by it. Concepts like ‘environment’, ‘ecology’, ‘the earth’ and ‘creation’ have been used and it is not always easy to determine what is meant by each one (Conradie, 2002: 181). Since the whole concept of environmental ethics has become very important, especially when looking at ‘global warming’, different kinds of pollution, more and more waste dumped in waterways, etc. it is also necessary to look at the Afrikaans Church’s action to help members understand and to do something meaningful to work against the decline of living conditions, not only in our country, but also in the world around us, because the whole world has become a ‘global village’.

The idea with this topic is not to develop a comprehensive seminar on reconciliation between man and environment, but just to make church members aware again of the time bomb on which the world is sitting. The researcher believes that many Afrikaans church members don’t pay much, if any, attention to the exploitation of nature or environment because we have become so used to the situation where the big corporations and whole countries search for more of what nature can present. It is imperative that churches send out a strong message of damage to the environment and try to propose ways that can be followed in our own living space to make the world a better place for the future.

Larry L. Rasmussen's (1996:4) quote of Sophocles' *Antigone* made an impact on the researcher as it conveys something of the "disaster" that is looming over the earth on which we live:

*Many the wonders but nothing more wondrous than man,
This thing crosses the sea in the winter's storm,
making his path through the roaring waves.
And she, the greatest of gods, the Earth –
deathless she is, and unwearied – he wears her away
as the ploughs go up and down from year to year
and his mules turn up soil.*

Yes, earth is amazingly resilient. But no, earth is not indefatigable. Nature, never spent, can be. She can be overwhelmed. One particularly powerful and errant species is overwhelming her.

Some of the problems that are posing a hazard for the environment are:

- the depletion of the ozone layer and global warming.
- air pollution due to gasses discharged from factories, motorcars, etc.
- acid rain as a result of moisture in the air combining with polluting gasses
- the dumping of nuclear waste and other toxic forms of waste
- clear felling the forests of the world, the source of life giving oxygen, for short term agricultural exploitation.
- soil erosion where good quality topsoil is removed due to overgrazing, deforestation, etc.
- water pollution from human, industrial and agricultural effluent.

Conradie stated that people who are living in urban townships "are often the victims of environmental degradation, caused elsewhere. Most of the problems people experience daily is environmental problems – even though these are usually not recognised as such". He went on to say that the people who are normally the most affected by the poisoning

and pollution are those in the poorer communities and those who are marginalised. (It is important to know that some kinds of pollution and disease know no boundary – just sniff the air during winter for example in Sandton-R) He showed that the following are some of the hazards with which people have to live:

- health hazards caused by air pollution – either through nearby industries or through braziers, the burning of coal;
- the pollution of water supplies;
- high population density with inadequate sanitation
- a high incidence of contagious diseases
- the visual ugliness of pollution, leading to a lack of basic human dignity;
- regular flooding or landslides (consider the Cape Flats, Gugulethu etc during the winter rains).
- the lack of basic infrastructure and
- cutting of trees for firewood in the neighbourhood; the struggle for political control over ever scarcer resources.

(Conradie, 2002: 188)

The haunting question, with which governments all over the globe are wrestling, is: What can be done regarding these looming disasters? There are no clear-cut answers. To look to the Bible to find a solution is the ultimate answer, because it is the Source book of life for the Christian, but as Conradie pointed out the usual Scripture references that are used for this, each has its own interpretation problem. The researcher personally believes that we can use references such as Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 2:15, but we must stress the notion of stewardship. We are stewards of that which God has endowed to us and we must be responsible for that, by setting the example in our own homes, by refraining from moans and groans about small issues.

Since the question is about reconciliation between man and environment, the researcher agrees with Conradie as he points out “three important dimensions of a Christian call to become involved in caring for the environment:

1. The earth is a *sacred gift* from God. The *beauty* of the earth proclaims the glory of the Creator.
2. The whole cosmos is the object of *God's continuous, creative, loving and nurturing care*.... In Christ the whole creation is reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:19). As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to treat others, including nature, with the same loving, nurturing care and respect.
3. The Christian hope is that the *Holy Spirit will renew the whole of creation*, that God will establish a new heaven and a new earth, that our own bodies, together with the rest of creation will finally be taken up into God's presence. To destroy creation is to turn away from this promise of God."

(Conradie, 2002:194, 196)

Thus the Afrikaans Churches can make an extremely important contribution if every member will trust the Holy Spirit to empower him or her to make a difference where he or she lives and works. It would be good if participants in this seminar/workshop can have the time to walk a few street blocks near the seminar facility and see what they can do practically to make it look better. They can visit a nearby township, just to see what the conditions are and become involved in an organisation that works there, or may even be the catalyst to bring such an organisation into being. This will help people to win back their dignity, especially when they work hand in hand with other ethnic groups. It must no longer be said, á la Bosch, that our most terrible guilt is that of which we were unaware. By becoming involved in our surrounding communities and getting our hands dirty, we can become free from being prisoners of our history and be challenged to become prisoners of hope.

The researcher believes that this model will help congregations to become ministers of reconciliation. It should be remembered that no human being can work in the heart of another – it is only the Holy Spirit that can do that. In this whole process of

reconciliation, of which confession of guilt and repentance, and the giving and receiving of forgiveness are part, we must remember that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

For a core PowerPoint presentation of own reconciliation model/workshop see Addendum 27.

This chapter started with some church leaders' views on hope. It is believed that this developed model can help congregations to get an overall idea of what reconciliation entails, and if they want to go further along the road to deeper healing, they can make use of one of the other models that have been shown.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 it was stated that the aim of the study is to evaluate the contributions of the Afrikaans Churches to the process of reconciliation in South Africa. Four research problems have been identified and from this a hypothesis was generated. In the study the hypothesis has been researched.

7.2 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Problem 1: How can churches develop a clear picture of reconciliation and their role in the process?

Problem 2: How can congregants of the Afrikaans Churches be empowered to become involved in reconciliation? Who must take responsibility for that?

Problem 3: Why do the Afrikaans Churches struggle with efforts of reconciliation? Are there any valid reasons for not continuing with the task? What needs to be done to have a greater percentage of people (congregants) taking responsibility for reconciliation in South Africa?

Problem 4: How can the process of church unity – the so-called ‘acid test’ for reconciliation – on Synodical and local level be enhanced? What should the role of the local congregation be?

7.3 HYPOTHESIS

During the Apartheid years (1961 – 1994) the Afrikaans Churches were often reluctant to exercise their prophetic calling to publicly warn against the system of Apartheid, that violated the rights of the majority of the citizens of South Africa. Many reasons can be offered for their reluctance:

- the churches didn't have a clear picture of what reconciliation entails and what their role is in the process.
- division within the Afrikaans Churches.
- misunderstanding of the essential message of the gospel of Christ.
- the inherent racism that dogged race relations in the community at large, were reflected in the churches.
- ecumenical isolation - both nationally and internationally.
- negligence of church leaders (ministers) to convey the decisions of synodical meetings to congregants and to help them to understand the whole issue of reconciliation and to empower them to become involved in it at local level.
- the struggle in the DRC family of churches to unite is the test of how motivated they are in the process of reconciliation.

The reluctance of some of the Afrikaans Churches to testify before the TRC had a negative influence on church members and Afrikaners in general. Also leadership in congregations has not paid enough attention or assisted their members to understand and implement the challenges of the TRC on the role of faith communities in South Africa. However, if the church does rise to the occasion it can become one of the major role players and the champion of healing and reconciliation in South Africa.

7.3.1 The history of the Afrikaans Churches

The history of the Afrikaans Churches goes back to 1652 when Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape with the Reformed Religion. For the first one-and-a-half-century the Reformed Church was situated in the Western- and Eastern Cape. Ministers from the Netherlands as well as from Scotland made the Cape their home. When the Voortrekkers moved from the Cape into the interior, they actually left the church behind and the DRC was not really interested in them. From time to time a minister would visit them, but there was no link with the Cape Synod of the DRC.

During the 1850s the Voortrekkers had settled in the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), the Transvaal, and they called a minister Rev. Dirk van der Hoff from the Netherlands to be their minister – the beginnings of the NHK. During the same period a schism occurred when Paul Kruger and some Doppers couldn't cope with the liberalism of van der Hoff and they formed, with Rev. Dirk Postma, the Gereformeerde Kerk (currently the RCSA).

So in the second half of the nineteenth century there were three churches with the same confessional basis in the Transvaal and already there was tension amongst them. The NHK was known as *Die Volkskerk* (State Church) with no inkling of doing missionary work. In 1858 a decision was taken that the NHK will be the church for white people only. This later became the notorious Article III, which was eventually changed in 1996. In the 1880s there was unification between the DRC and the NHK to form the NH of G Kerk, but it was short lived and in the 1890s there were again three churches namely the NHK, RCSA and the NH of G Kerk. Through the years there were attempts to come closer but it was only in 1939 that the DRC and the RCSA came together. In 1943 the NHK joined the other two to form the Inter Church Commission (ICC) (Tussenkerklike Kommissie) where mutual issues were discussed. In 2003 the name had been changed to the Inter Church Council (Tussenkerklike Raad). Through the years these discussions regarded: The viewpoint of the different churches on Scripture and Confession; the relation between Scripture and Confession; study of the Belgic Confession; areas where the churches can work together and the question regarding unification of the three “sister churches”. One of the churches, the NHK has not consented to unity because it worked with concepts like plurality in unity while the DRC and RCSA worked with concepts like sinful separation and structural unity. As each of the churches had its own ethos, which was precious to their members, unification is a very emotional issue.

Because of the division it was not possible for these churches to let their prophetic voice be heard by the government, especially as regards race relations. It happened, however, that each of the churches individually had discussions with the government or with individual Ministers of portfolios. During the 1980s the DRC and RCSA came to a point where they could say that there cannot be discriminated against anybody according to race or colour, because such attitude of a person, church or state is contrary to the Word

of God. The NHK, however, because of Article III, carried on supporting the government's policy. Thus there was not only confusion amongst the Afrikaners, but also despondency by those who wanted change but didn't have the "voice". Individuals in these churches, like Beyers Naudé, Ben Marais, Ben Keet, Albert Geysers, M J Redelinghuis, and others, who did not go along with church policy, were released from their duties and in some instances their membership. In such a way the prophetic voice of some of the churches were stilled.

7.3.2 The National Party in Government

When the National Party became the new government of South Africa in 1948, the policy of Apartheid was already in place and the DRC especially gave legitimisation for it as well as scriptural grounds for the policy. Although the other two churches have not openly endorsed it, they never tried to oppose Apartheid as not scriptural. Because the NHK and the RCSA are relatively small churches their members are part of the same bigger Afrikaner community as the members of the DRC are. This is an important fact because when certain events made headlines in the DRC, the members of the other two churches were in the same community, but there was a difference. The NHK is the most conservative of the three and any event that has to do with racism was criticised as against the government.

Because the Afrikaner and his church were for many years inseparable it is not surprising to find that racism in society was also reflected in the churches. In the DRC it had begun with the decision in 1857 that, because of the weakness of some (Afrikaners), it was not possible to have other races as church members. This has been the proverbial splinter in the eye of the DRC up until now. During 1986 the DRC's policy changed with the acceptance of *Church and Society* in which it was clearly stated that the DRC is open. Although it was church policy, there was actually very little of it seen in practice. The racism that dogged race relations in the community, were alive and well in the churches. It was the same in the other two sister churches, as well as the white section of the AFM and it is even truer of the APK. It seems today that racism is still alive and well, although

there are people talking about reverse racism. This influences the Afrikaners and it has resulted in many breaking their bond with the church.

7.3.3 The DRC from 1960 onward

Since the 1960s events followed one after the other in the DRC. Cottesloe, Human Relations in View of Scripture, the Reformed Day Witness, the Open Letter, Church and Society, the General Synod of 1990, the Rustenburg Consultation, Vereeniging Consultation, the release of Nelson Mandela and the ANC government, the 1994 Synod of Reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. All these things happened because of people in the DRC, leaders and members, who were not satisfied with the policy of Apartheid of the National government. Because of the size of the other Afrikaans Churches, these things have also had an effect on them, but as Bosch stated in 1985 that in inter-human communication people are usually more aware of the sin of others than their own sins. The average church member in the Afrikaans Churches was apathetic towards the broad policy and tends to trust the leaders and especially the minister.

What happened to the prophetic voice of the church? Research has shown that every time a voice was raised against Apartheid and the violations of human rights from somebody in the DRC, or the other two churches, (which happened very rarely, if ever), the official church leadership said the same thing: ‘Stay calm’. They then tried, in meeting after meeting, to explain to the people what was actually meant by what was said. There is one sentence that is repeatedly heard, like a silver thread through these years, when it came to conflict situations in the church, namely “*The executive urgently call up the members of the Church to remain calm in these difficult times when so many onslaughts are launched against the Dutch Reformed Church.*” These words sound familiar, because during the 1980s the people of South Africa heard time and again about the “total communistic onslaught” on the country. Congregants had not been led to see things in the perspective of the Word of God, but it was linked with the official policy of the government. After the formation of the APK in 1987, the DRC was very cautious not to say anything that

could upset more members. As late as during the General Synod of the DRC in 2004 it was said, when the unification of the DRC and URCSA were discussed, that

“It is our conviction that in the event of re-unification of the churches, we must avoid church schism at all costs... We would like to handle the process in such a way that all ministers, congregations and members of the churches will be united in the way.” (Acta Synodi, 2004:428)

It is this researcher’s conviction that if, at this late stage in the history of the Afrikaans Churches in South Africa, people want to leave the church because of any race related issue, they must do so by all means. We can no longer obey men more than God.

7.3.4 Biggest problem of Reconciliation

During this study it became clear that one of the biggest problems of *reconciliation* in South Africa, is the definition of the concept. During the late 1980’s more and more people asked about the role of the church in the situation. It seems as if there had been some misunderstanding of the essential message of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, therefore, churches couldn’t convert the theory of reconciliation into practical terms. Conferences on reconciliation were organised all over the country and churches were invited to attend. Conferences such as the National Initiative for Reconciliation (1985) in Pietermaritzburg, from which followed the Christian Initiative for Reconciliation (1986) in Potchefstroom, and the conference about reconciliation which was organised by the DRC for April 1986.

At one such conference, at the University of Western Cape, Prof. Dirkie Smit made the statement that it seems to him that in the current ideological struggle in South Africa the symbol of reconciliation does not seem to have the necessary power to transform society. He went on to elaborate, saying that the concept of reconciliation does not have the emotional value for the struggling groups in South Africa. Reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ and, therefore, it is linked with concepts like love, justice, peace and holiness (Smit, 1986: 85ff).

The difference in meaning became quite clear during the work of the TRC. The Commissioners, amongst themselves, could not readily come to grips with the meaning

of reconciliation. Archbishop Tutu used it in its biblical meaning, and this has led to the problem of people complaining that the hearings were too “Christian”. But as reconciliation is actually a biblical concept, this is the concept that the Christian churches should use when talking about reconciliation. From the New Testament it becomes clear that:

- Reconciliation is an act of God. God reconciled people to himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-19; Romans 5:1-11)
- Reconciliation has to do with the creation of a new humanity. (Ephesians 2:14-18)
- God reconciled the whole world with Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- God reconciled the cosmic powers with Himself and with each other (Colossians 1:20)

It boils down to the idea that there are four relationships that need reconciliation: Between God and man; between man and man; between man and nature and man with himself. It is this message that didn't come through to people on ground level and therefore it was not possible to let a prophetic voice be heard as regards Apartheid and the accompanying violence in the country.

7.3.5 Isolation of the Afrikaans Churches

Since 1960 the Afrikaans Churches (especially the three ‘sister’ churches) became more and more isolated both nationally and internationally. This was because of their support of the government’s policy of Apartheid. The fact of the matter is that both the DRC and the NHC were members of the World Council of Churches but after the Cottesloe Consultation, they both resigned. In 1982 both these churches’ membership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches were suspended. The NHC decided to resign from this ecumenical body. It became more difficult for other churches to have relationships with the Afrikaans speaking churches because there was fear on their part that this would hamper their relationships with churches worldwide. Since 1994, however, things have started to change. Firstly, because of the DRC’s attitude since 1986 when *Church and*

Society was adopted as policy document, as well as the numerous times this church confessed about its wrongs as regards Apartheid in the past. The NHK decided to get rid of Article III, which has made it impossible for people of colour to become members of the church. The RCSA was never a member of the WCC, the SACC or the WARC, so they didn't have to take up relationships again like the other two churches. The Afrikaans Protestantse Kerk (APK) was never a member of any ecumenical body although, over the past few years, they started to make contact with other churches, especially in the country.

7.3.6 Ignorance of DRC Congregants

Since 1974, with the adoption of Human Relations in View of Scripture, members of the DRC were actually kept in the dark regarding what was going on in the church. This problem became more acute with the Reformed Day Witness in 1980, the Open Letter in 1982, Church and Society in 1986, the General Synod of 1990, the Rustenburg Consultation in 1990, the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the ANC government from 1994, the Synod of Reconciliation in 1994 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1996-1998.

The members of the Afrikaans Churches were in dire straits because of the fact that very few ministers really provided enough information to their members, because of fear that members will leave the church. This has happened, especially after 1987 when the APK was formed. The demands of obedience to the Word of God were not stressed and this has led to the trustworthiness of the church coming under suspicion, together with the trustworthiness of some of the leaders of the church. A good example was the confession of Prof. Willie Jonker at Rustenburg in November 1990. This was the statement that had to be explained to church members at numerous meetings where people were asked to stay calm. Although it seemed as if the DRC had found its prophetic voice, in general the pulpits were quiet and church members were not strengthened for their witness in the work place and towards other groups. Prof. Adrio König was asked, during an interview: *Do you think our "church people" are strong enough (after all the years of being "in church") to testify/confess towards other groups?* His answer? "No, they were not made

strong to do it. They may be strong in other areas. There is in the DRC no general conviction that we did wrong and that we must confess”.

Maybe one of the biggest problems as regards this whole issue is the fact that many of the ministers in congregations didn't understand some of these things themselves and, therefore, could not explain it to their members. When the concept of reconciliation became the “in” thing, most of the people hadn't any idea of what was actually meant by it, especially when it was linked to the TRC.

7.3.7 DRC Synod of 1994

Something happened in the DRC during the Synod of 1994 when Mr Mandela had the chance to address the Synod. Not only did he extend a hand of reconciliation to the church but also the church itself extended a hand of reconciliation to its own prophets, who, through the years, warned the church about the road it had taken. A new impetus came into the church but the forces against reconciliation of ethnic groups were working very hard, as was seen later during that year when the legislation was tabled for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for South Africa.

When the TRC took up its work in 1996, there was a cloud of negativity against it from the corner of the Afrikaners. Many saw it as nothing other than a witch-hunt and a type of Nuremberg trail. Right from the start the leadership of the DRC made it clear that the church would pray for the commission and its work, but there was a reluctance to promote the work and to lead members to a more positive attitude. Even though the TRC, and especially Desmond Tutu, in his capacity as chairman, went out of their way to accommodate the faith communities and by name the Christian churches. More than once it was said that if reconciliation and unity were to become a reality in South Africa, the energy and commitment of its entire people would be required. Dr Brigalia Bam said that President Mandela had, on several occasions, said to her that it is not possible to talk about reconciliation in South Africa without involving the DRC, because they have a strong following, are influential and the DRC members are worshippers who look to the church for guidance (Bam, 2003:27).

How is it possible that the Afrikaners could withdraw from the whole situation while there was such a high opinion of them? Maybe Dr Bam had the answer when she remarked that it seems that the churches are running away from the new issues that they have to face; especially real reconciliation instead of spending energy on survival. One thing that the church must understand is that in order to assist the world in dealing with reconciliation it must first deal with it in the church. Therefore it is of the utmost importance that the Dutch Reformed Church Family must unite as soon as possible.

7.3.8 Unification of Churches in DRC family

One of the biggest struggles for the DRC through the years has been the unification of the churches in the DRC family – the “acid test” as it is called in DRC circles. Since discussions began again in the 1980’s it happened so many times that the churches were on the brink of a breakthrough, just to be stopped in their tracks by one or other “power”. Both Rev. Freek Swanepoel and Rev. James Buys mentioned it in the interviews as stated in paragraph 5.5.1. For both the DRC and the URCSA it was not possible to talk about reconciliation while in their own ranks there were still divisions

As has been shown in Ch 5, it seems that the General Synods of both churches have at last come to a point where unification is of the highest priority for both. The meeting of the two Moderaments during June 2006 and the discussions and decisions, which were taken, show one thing: unification cannot wait any longer. God is still in control!

7.3.9 Faith Communities in South Africa

Faith communities enjoy a unique and privileged position in South African society. They are widely respected and have far-reaching moral influence. As such, they should play a key role in healing and reconciliation initiatives. (TRC Report Volume 5: 316) The further we move away from the era of the TRC, the more the Afrikaans Churches come to realise that they can’t be spectators on the periphery, otherwise they will be shunted aside and will no longer have credibility in society. Some are already experiencing it. The

final report of the TRC stated that: The vital importance of the multi-layered healing of human relationships in post-Apartheid South Africa is underlined. Relationships of individuals with themselves; relationships between victims; relationships between survivors and perpetrators; relationships within families, between neighbours and within and between communities; relationships within different institutions, between different generations, between racial and ethnic groups, between workers and management and, above all, between the beneficiaries of Apartheid and those who have been disadvantaged by it.

But it was not like that when the TRC started its work in 1996. Many voices were raised in the Afrikaans Churches to the effect that the TRC will be another “Nuremberg trail”. At the start the DRC leadership was very positive and pledged to pray for the TRC, but as time went on and more and more atrocities were made known, the negativity grew amongst the Afrikaners. Today, in 2007, there is another upsurge amongst the Afrikaners, because of the fact that some of the members of the previous government, like Mr Adriaan Vlok and Gen. Van der Merwe, are being brought before court because of things they would have been guilty of during the Apartheid years. The word “Nuremberg” is heard more and more. Most of the ministers in the churches were also very negative and this didn’t help to heal the wounds of perpetrators and victims, who were sometimes members of these congregations. When the final report was handed over to the State President, many thought that everything was over and done with and that they could carry on with their lives. But what about the proposals of the TRC addressed to the faith communities, and specifically the Christian churches? Many churches haven’t taken notice of these proposals, let alone tried to begin a process to help with the need in society. The greatest challenge today for the Afrikaans speaking churches is to roll up their sleeves and get on with the work!

Archbishop Tutu said: “*Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the lives of nations are not just airy-fairy religious and spiritual things, nebulous and unrealistic. They are the stuff of practical politics*” (TRC Report Vol. 5: 350).

There were enough opportunities to break free from the shackles of Apartheid; enough prophetic voices in the Church; enough opportunities for the Church to say “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.*” (Acts 4: 19 NKJV), but because of the interference of political leaders in the affairs of the church as well as “strong” church-leaders, the ordinary white church member was pacified that everything was under control although the country was under siege by a “total onslaught”..

7.3.10 Suggested Models

The researcher believes that the models that have been suggested to help the church in starting a process of healing and reconciliation will be of help for members to empower themselves to go out and be bridges of reconciliation in their communities.

7.3.11 All working for the good

The researcher believes that South Africa is going through a difficult time in its history, but there are enough positive powers at work in the lives of the majority of its people that a solution will be found. The current leadership struggle in the governing party, the fact that there are no strong leaders amongst the other ethnic groups, all of this will work for the good, because then the Christians in South Africa can, with renewed vigour proclaim: “*I lift my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*” (Psalm 121:1 NIV) and: “*We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making this appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.* (2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV)