

## **CHAPTER SIX: RECONCILIATION MODELS AND RITUALS**

There are both dark valleys of death and bright spots in all human religions.  
(S T Kgatla, 1995:128)

### **6.1 Evaluation and appraisal**

In this chapter I will evaluate the different reconciliation models and rituals by using the criteria that I have established. In the second part of this chapter I will draw some conclusions and try to find reconciliation models that suit both my own and the South African context.

To evaluate the different reconciliation models is a very subjective endeavour. The quality and usefulness of a single model depends on so many variables, including the actors' intentions and sincerity, which cannot be measured. Still, I will try to make some distinctions according to the criteria set out above. This is by no means absolute, but rather represents my views which are undoubtedly biased and very relative.

#### **6.1.1 Rituals intended to create community**

##### **6.1.1.1 Community**

The rituals and reconciliation models intended to create community by just restoring the community seem to agree with both the integrating and transcending principles. They are coherent, simple and completely in line with traditional African thought on the importance of the order of creation and the divinity behind the community. In addition these models

are relative, uses more authority than force (as it makes sense to stick to it) and does make a difference for the better.

This type of reconciliation model is aimed at restoring harmony, it is cyclical, and reconciliation turns out to be a structure. In the structure lies some power relations – it looks as if the structure may apply some pressure on the individuals to stay reconciled. But this may be consensual. It involves both individuals and society, and individuals do act on behalf of groups. This reconciliation is dependant on a shared culture and it is precisely that which facilitates the social reconciliation.

However, it does not follow the traditional prerequisites of truth, confession and forgiveness suitable for the South African context. Neither does it suggest any kind of justice or reparation (except in the case of the washing of wounds); in fact it purposely does the opposite. It aims to restore harmony regardless of what happened, who was at fault and what injustices remain. On the other hand, it does offer humility and dignity in abundance. All parties play an active role, although in the case of the offended one, he or she (or God) plays the bigger role while the offender must just accept the offered harmony and help maintain it.

#### **6.1.1.2 Sacrifices and offerings of reconstruction**

Sacrifices and offerings of reconstruction are drenched in African traditions and as such coherent and in accord with traditional thinking. This model covers the facts excellently in that it directly addresses the problem and cuts to the core in setting it right. Although it is an ingenious solution, it is not so relative or perspectival and one gets the idea that the rituals do not really ever change. One cannot say whether it makes a change for the

better. It may help individuals to feel reconciled to God or their ancestors, but it does seem a bit mechanical which may diminish personal responsibility if applied to two groups.

As the case with the community-creating rituals, this form of reconciliation entails cyclical harmony. Reconciliation is a new structure, but does also involve a complicated process. It is probably intended more to reconcile individuals to the rest of creation (including society) than it is meant for societal use. A shared culture is supposed in order to obtain social reconciliation.

This model does not comply with the requirements of truth, confession and forgiveness. And though some sort of justice or a balance is established, one speak of reparation in the usual sense. The dignity of both parties is at play, the offenders are treated with dignity and the offended party's dignity is restored. Initiative comes from the side of the offenders, often with the help of a third party, while the more passive participation of the offended is important.

#### **6.1.1.3 Sacrifices and offerings of communion**

Closely related to the above, is the type of reconciliation effected by sacrifices made to achieve communion. These kinds of sacrifices integrate and transcend in much the same way as the reconstruction sacrifices. Even though it too is a bit mechanical, the aim of communion probably produces better or more observable results, especially between individuals but also in other relations. It might be more relative or perspectival as different variations of this ritual can be expected.

This model shows the same anthropological and sociological structure: Harmonious and cyclical reconciliation aimed at establishing a structure in order to reconcile mostly individuals who share the same cultural background. To the extent that a third party may be involved, especially as a facilitator and keeper of divine and otherworldly secrets, power relations may come to the fore.

Again dignity and humility are the main focuses. There is justice in the limited sense of a restored order when the sacrifice is performed by or on behalf of the offender. The sacrifices of communion can be used to greater effect between individuals, than the sacrifices of reconstruction. When this happens, dignity, humility and participation of both sides are greatly enhanced.

#### **6.1.1.4 Medicines**

When medicines are used achieve reconciliation, the evaluation and principles are almost the same as the rituals mentioned above. The role, though, that an expert medicine man or woman plays can create unequal power relations. Still, this power is usually ascribed by the patient rather than demanded by the medicine dispenser (Turaki, 1999:154).

Charms or amulets may change the social character of reconciliation to resemble a process more than a structure. Its visibility or touchability may produce longer lasting or more convincing results, increasing these rituals' change for the better.

But in a sense it is so mechanical and impersonal that the dignity of the reconciliation seeker might be under siege. Interestingly, the African Initiated Churches, which make

liberal use of African rituals, generally shun the use of traditional (or Western) medicines. They see such use as indicating a lack of faith (Hayes, 1998:171).

In the South African context, this model fails to meet all the requirements: There might be some elements of truth, confession or forgiveness attached to the broader ritual, but not specifically to the medicine part; there is no real justice, very one-sided and limited participation and questionable restoration of dignity.

## **6.1.2 Rituals intended to propitiate and transfer guilt**

### **6.1.2.1 Sacrifices and offerings of propitiation**

Sacrifices and offerings of propitiation link up with the traditional African worldview and as such satisfy the conditions of integration. But this ritual model fails to meet the other important requirements. It is not perspectival, relative or historical, and neither is it stimulating. It achieves little natural authority and the difference it makes is dubious.

In terms of the human sciences it holds reconciliation to be a structured and cyclical harmony, where both individuals and probably more often, societies, can reconcile with God or ancestors. It presupposes a strong cultural identification.

These rituals fail to address the requirements of truth and confession, but promise some kind of forgiveness. They do not also establish justice. The actors' roles may be one-sided, as the offended just receives the propitiatory gift. There is little evidence of true humility or dignity, even though it is quite possibly supposed to restore the dignity of the offended.

### **6.1.2.2 Scapegoats**

When scapegoats are used, rather than propitiatory gifts, it does make a difference for the better in the community. While it may feel a bit strange to a Western mind, the evidence suggests that in a number of communities stories of scapegoats even become national myths. It may be that these rituals are so memorable or haunting that they remain in people's minds for a long time. Once-for-all sacrifices perform even better. According to Derrida, (1998:50-51) these kinds of sacrifices paradoxically serve to accentuate the value of and the respect for life.

Scapegoating works with the same idea of reconciliation as the propitiatory sacrifices. Reconciliation is a harmony to be established, but the process is more elaborate. When the scapegoats volunteer or at least agree with the practice, power relations are healthier than when it is forced on someone.

Unlike in the case of sacrifices of propitiation, truth and confession (as well as forgiveness) are important parts of these rituals. Scapegoat sacrifice is centred on justice. As in the above, it is one-sided and has little impact on the dignity or humility of the participants.

### **6.1.3 Rituals intended to expel or accept**

#### **6.1.3.1 Prayer**

When Africans ask God to expel evil or fix domestic problems, they act in accordance with African thinking. This is a simple and coherent way of dealing with problems that are greater than they are. The biggest advantage of prayer is that it is very relative and

flexible and can be used in different ways and in different situations. It is also historical. Prayer supposes the authority of God or ancestors. It may not be so stimulating in that it tends to restrict or impede further human efforts, but on the other hand it probably makes a difference for the better when used to expel evil that is considered to be beyond human control.

Prayer is so open, that a prayer for reconciliation may intend either harmony or conflict, either be cyclical or linear, involve a process or a structure, be individual or societal and need not be grounded in a shared culture. It is probably used more to attain functionalist ends, but depending on the problem, it may be intended differently. It calls for a powerful solution and thus relies on the use of power.

It is hard to say what role truth, confession and forgiveness play and whether any justice is established. It depends on the specific prayer. There may be somewhat of a one-sided imbalance between the actors although petitionary prayer does expect a reaction from the party the prayer is addressed to. The act of praying does establish what might be a healthy portion of humility in the petitioner.

#### **6.1.3.2 Scapegoats**

When the prayer is sent by scapegoat, it does not differ much from a verbal prayer. It may tend to be a bit less flexible and perspectival, as this kind of prayer can be seen as a cure-all for a variety of different dilemmas. It may even be a bit more forceful if it is done to coerce action by God. But as in the case of human scapegoats that propitiate and transfer guilt, the ritual may have a big impact on its performers.

Sociologically and anthropologically scapegoat-carried prayer is the same as normal prayer, but it may demand a greater cultural communality from those involved. The weight of responsibility shifts quite a bit to the scapegoat, which has an influence (for better or for worse) on this kind of ritual's usefulness in our context.

### **6.1.3.3 Expulsion**

Evil and strife can also be expelled through rituals, without the help of God or the ancestors. This is certainly in line with African thinking and simple enough. The many ways in which these rituals are performed attest to their relativity and historicity. And it does seem to make a difference for the better, considering its wide usage to heal disagreement within societies. And it is in line with good psychology. It may be based on force when an evil spirit is ritually chased away, but also be built on authority when two individuals decide to expel their anger.

In the case of expulsion reconciliation is seen as a cyclical and structural harmony between individuals or societies and relies on some cultural agreement. As is the case with other rituals of expulsion, power can play an important part in these rituals but may at other times not influence the participants (but rather the externalised problem) when something like anger are expelled.

Truth, confession and forgiveness play an important role when performed between individuals, but justice may not necessarily follow. This ritual relies heavily on the actors on both sides, whether it is a spirit that must flee or a sister who must expel her jealousy. Dignity and humility is also emphasised.

#### **6.1.3.4 Acceptance**

The ingenious reconciliation rituals of acceptance are both integrating and transcending. They are simple, coherent and link up with typical African thought but are at the same time stimulating, relative and flexible, and they rely more on authority than on force. Does it make a difference for the better? It depends on the actors and the situation. In a context where a new spirit is accepted into the community, it does make this kind of difference; where differences between individuals are accepted it probably works as well. But it may sometimes deny or cover-up an evil that should be expelled rather than welcomed.

The kind of reconciliation achieved through these rituals is once again harmonious, cyclical and structural, although the harmony comprises new elements and thus differs from the previous states of peace. It involves the whole society and depends on a shared cultural worldview.

Reconciliation of this nature is excellent for restoring the dignity of all parties, but (may as a result) neglect truth, confession, and justice. The actors are primarily the offended – a bit one-sided but considering the side, quite remarkable.

#### **6.1.3.5 Cleansing**

Cleansing rituals are kinds of rituals of expulsion similar to those evaluated in the paragraph above. They have a strong psychological value and express the elements of truth, confession and forgiveness strongly. Although these rituals also restore dignity where they was damaged, it often lacks justice.

The “washing of the spears” ceremony is a good example of a useful cleansing ceremony. It is part of a coherent myth of the *intelezi* and undoubtedly worked well in the violent 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **6.1.4 Rituals with a mixture of intentions**

##### **6.1.4.1 Rituals of rebellion**

The strange rituals of rebellion integrate with African thinking in that they seek to uphold the all-important balance. Furthermore, the acts of rebellion are focussed on the potential sources of trouble, such as the authority of the chief or animosity between in-laws. In addition, this kind of ritual transcends the expected by being perspectival, relative and stimulating, relying of authority rather than force and making a difference for the better.

These rituals resemble the typical African idea of reconciliation as a structured harmony, but the harmony involved here is achieved through quite the opposite means. This is harmony through disharmony, structure through chaos. And it is more of a Marxist process that repeats itself yearly, than any other African reconciliation model. Power is overthrown and society and culture is challenged.

Truth, confession and forgiveness are highlighted, justice established and humility and dignity restored (or enforced!). The actors include all parties and this type of ritual actually empowers members of society to take part.

#### **6.1.4.2 Dance**

When dance is used to facilitate reconciliation it integrates with and transcends African culture. Dance is typically African, but it brings forth a transcendent experience. In dance Africans make contact with the divine. These rituals may not be so stimulating or relative and historical, but they do make a difference for the better, utilising the strength of the community.

Anthropologically and sociologically speaking they are harmonious, cyclical and structured reconciliation with special emphasis on the role of the society. The involvement of the community generates a power that is used for the good of individuals.

The elements of dignity, justice (or restoration) are attended to. When the dance is used to reconcile individuals, it may produce forgiveness, but it may also deny justice. The involvement of all actors is actively pursued for and the success of this ritual depends on it.

#### **6.1.5 Revisiting Augustine, Anselm and Abelard**

It would be useful to also evaluate the traditional Western models of reconciliation according to the criteria of good religion, anthropological and sociological structure and the South African context.

##### **6.1.5.1 Augustine's Victory model**

Augustine's victory model of reconciliation is not so different to the African models of expulsion. The one big difference is that the Augustinian model does not integrate well

with modern Western culture that it is supposed to serve. The elements in myth like the devil and the underworld are no longer part of our worldview. This model thus is no longer understandable or simple and does not cover our modern facts in an understandable language. It is, however, coherent with Christian teaching of God conquering evil.

It does transcend our culture. Even though the language is foreign to us, it highlights the problem of forces beyond our control and serves up a solution to the problem. It may therefore make a difference for the better. And (like the expulsion rituals) it can be of psychological value.

This ritual was mainly used to establish reconciliation between God and humans and never was really employed to bring about reconciliation between individuals. In turn, the strength of African rituals of expulsion strength lay exactly in their success in reconciling individuals. Reconciliation is seen by Augustine to be a harmonious, structural affair but it is more linear and apocalyptic than cyclical.

In the vertical context that it is used, truth, confession and forgiveness are not so important and neither is justice. God is the primary actor and humans simply accept God's achievement. It does bring about human dignity, especially in the sense that it frees humans from external powers.

#### **6.1.5.2 Anselm's Objective model**

Anselm's objective reconciliation model also has its parallels in the propitiatory sacrifices of Africa. But Anselm's model is even less capable of integrating with modern culture than Augustine's. Anselm's myth of God's honour that is offended and the plan to restore it

would today be called esoteric or even occult. Furthermore, it does not link up with the Biblical ideas of God's love that always exceeds God's justice. It is hard to see where it transcends our human culture. The cruelty of the cross is haunting and may cause humans to look at God or their lives differently (as happened when Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* was released). The fact that it is once and for all suggests that it offers a permanent solution.

Anselm sees reconciliation as a harmony and a structure but (as in the case of the victory model) it is linear and not cyclical. The power relations seem unhealthy. This model is aimed at reconciling God to humans and has little use for relations between humans. It depends completely on the same cultural background – in this case the culture of medieval Europe.

This model's strength lies in its emphasis on justice and the restoration of God's (and other offended parties') dignity. But the dignity of the offenders is not taken into account. There is forgiveness, but it is without truth or confession and the actor is only God, albeit in two persons.

#### **6.1.5.3 Abelard' Subjective model**

The subjective reconciliation model teaches that Jesus came to show us how to reconcile, and that reconciliation happens wherever people follow Jesus' example. It seems simple, coherent with Biblical teaching and links up much better with present thinking on reconciliation than either the objective or victory models. It is transcending in that it is completely relative and historical, stimulating and surely makes a difference for the better.

According to this model, reconciliation can either entail harmony or conflict, depending on the context (or Gospel). So too, reconciliation can be a cyclical structure or a linear process. It probably leans towards the individual sphere and does not presuppose a cultural loyalty, but it can lead to cultural understanding.

It is difficult to evaluate this model's suitability in our context because it is so relative. It should contain elements of confession and forgiveness, and if it really emulates Jesus' example, it brings about justice, humility and dignity. The model depends only on the actions of one actor – the person doing the reconciling, while the other party may or may not respond likewise (but probably does – Berendsen, 2002:173-175).

It seems that no single reconciliation model is perfect and none completely wrong. But some may be more appropriate for a specific condition or historical setting. In the next section I will try to determine which of these models can be useful in the present contexts.

## **6.2 Personal understanding**

What are my requirements for a personal reconciliation model – for a model that helps me? It can be expressed through the criteria of the previous chapter. A suitable model should integrate with my post-modern worldview and morality. According to John Milbank (1997:269-270), most religions (and polities) secure themselves by drawing boundaries around the “same” and excluding the “other”. This is usually done through scapegoats and in expulsion and purging rituals. Postmodern Christianity should not draw boundaries but allow for alternative views, groups and practices (Ruether, 2002:xv). This rules out sacrifices, esoteric and overly magical myths, evil spirits, and propitiatory myths that

presuppose a quality in God that I do not want for myself, like for example vengeance. A model should be clear and simple, make sense, and link up with my thinking. On the other hand, a reconciliation model must also transcend my worldview. It must challenge me to change, must stimulate my thinking about reconciliation and be completely relative.

The structure of reconciliation should be open to the possibility that reconciliation may entail conflict. Younger people today often view the society or status quo as unjust and in need of change. Thus reconciliation could be linear instead of cyclical, and a process rather than a structure. It may take place on a societal level, but the true test of the effectiveness of a certain model would certainly be reconciliation for the individual. A common cultural foundation cannot be required in a diverse and global society.

I am also a citizen of South Africa, and as such, any choice I make should be relevant to this context. Although the elements of truth, confession and forgiveness, justice, humility and dignity and involved actors applies more to the next section, it should be kept in mind for my personal understanding of reconciliation. My personal views influence my reconciliation in the wider context and vice versa.

These requirements rule out all the rituals intended to propitiate and transfer guilt, as well as rituals that make use of sacrifices, scapegoats and medicines. I usually see dance as a recreational activity (although the toyi-toyi dance played a big role in the struggle against apartheid – Hay, 1998:136), and thus exclude it too. I shall consider the remaining possibilities.

## 6.2.1 Possible Models for Personal Understanding

### 6.2.1.1 Community

This model of reconciliation simply teaches that the establishment and maintenance of a community is already reconciliation. Its strength lies in this simplicity, making it useful to members of different cultures and worldviews. There are no intricate and esoteric presuppositions, nor bloody sacrifices. God created community as a means of reconciliation. It is easy to understand, and one can be guided by it. John Milbank (1997:273-274, and also Ruether, 2002:xv) asserts that the idea of community is thoroughly Christian, and that Christ overcomes evil in community with his followers, providing a memory of perfect community and a new language of community:

The Christian claim is that the narratives about Christ show what love – a difficult and demanding practice requiring more subtlety, style, and correct idiom than mere “well-meaning” – is. That here is the Logos, the lost harmonic pattern of genuine human life, which can now be reappropriated.

(Milbank, 1997:273)

The idea of *ubuntu* also inspires personal growth. According to Tutu (1999:35):

A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.

A community reconciliation model does, however, usually envisage reconciliation as a harmonious structure, but can probably be used in the Marxist, revolutionary sense as well, if the needs of the community call for change. It makes an individual appeal and

does not depend on shared values or culture other than a need to reconcile. It does offer the element of humility and dignity, qualities sorely lacking in our context.

#### **6.2.1.2 Prayer**

Prayer as a model for reconciliation is as simple and useful as can be. It certainly fits with the worldview of all religious persons, me included. The added value of this ritual is that problems or power beyond personal control or influence can be addressed through prayer. This is a strong transcending factor which can be very relevant for individuals.

Furthermore, prayer is not only open to different contexts, but to the different structures of reconciliation too. Although it does not necessarily require truth, justice, or the equal involvement of the actors, a prayer for reconciliation fits the wider societal context.

#### **6.2.1.3 Expulsion and cleansing**

Rituals of expulsion and cleansing depend on the belief in a spirit which can be expelled. As such, it is not very useful for people who do not live in an animist world. But if the spirits are understood more psychologically or figuratively, the unquestionable benefits of this model may be appreciated. Rituals of this nature are especially useful to reconcile individuals as I have shown. Still, they are less open and relative than simple prayer and in their terms reconciliation can be restricted to the usual harmonious cycle.

#### **6.2.1.4 Acceptance**

The rituals of acceptance are the inverse of the rituals of expulsion, and offer the same benefits, possibilities and drawbacks. But the whole idea of accepting a troublesome “spirit” or notion is valuable. My usual Western, postmodern instinct would be to try to expel whatever it is that threatens me. It may sometimes be better to accept it – quite transcending! What I believe makes this acceptance so special is that it offers more than just Eastern indifference, but complete and active, courting acceptance.

#### **6.2.1.5 Rituals of rebellion**

The principal behind the rituals of rebellion, that harmony is achieved through disharmony and structure through chaos, resonates nicely with my worldview. It is harder to imagine how exactly this ritual can explain the work of God in Christ. Can Christ be seen as a divine provocateur? This concept seems almost blasphemous but maybe Luke would have liked it? It does offer many new, empowering possibilities for reconciliation among individuals. This kind of ritual sees reconciliation as a linear process of conflict. It also suits the wider context in that it brings about usually unarticulated truth, and justice, humility and dignity. Stephanie Mitchem (2002:260) stresses this idea when saying: “... reconciliation challenges all oppressive, dehumanizing systems, not merely restoring the former order, but rebalancing the old so that a new heaven and earth can begin”.

According to Bernard Connor (1998:72-73), there is a difference between mediation and reconciliation. “The mediator seeks to lessen the hostility between conflicting parties by persuading each to curb their belligerency, tone down their demands and concentrate attention on what they have in common” (1998:72). In contrast, true reconciliation that

seeks to put all social relations on a new basis may provoke further division and conflict.

He writes that “reconciliation depends upon conversion taking place” (1998:72).

Those who speak of reconciliation when they are appealing for compromise to reduce overt conflict or a lesser degree of violence have lost the meaning of the term as it is used in Christian theology. Reconciliation is much more far reaching than mediating between enemies to obtain a better *modus vivendi*, where those in the wrong – and they may be on both sides – still retain their basic antagonistic positions. Arranging a ceasefire or a truce, obtaining a milder form of oppression, or a slightly more just arrangement, may (or may not depending on the circumstances) be a tactical goal worth pursuing. Identifying such goals with ‘reconciliation’ debases them.

(Connor, 1998:73)

#### **6.2.1.6 Initiative from above**

The !Kaggen story hints that Africans can conceive that God simply forgives and restores by his own initiative. While the initiative from above myth may not be as stimulating as some of the others, it certainly fits my idea of God. Can we say that God just forgave us, without the intricate explanations of how and why he did it? This is what Hosea has in mind:

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man; the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath.

(Hosea 11:8-9)

#### **6.2.2 Appraisal of Models for Personal Understanding**

These models do help me. They elucidate different aspects of reconciliation that I need to deal with. If I want to imagine God’s role in my reconciliation to him, the story of !Kaggen assures me that reconciliation is God’s gift to me. The reconciliation model of prayer helps

me understand that God can help me when I feel helpless, especially when the problems I face seem to be beyond my control. This may apply to my need to reconcile to both God and other human beings.

The image of communion as reconciliation and the beautiful myth behind it, remind me that all reconciliation is bound to the community and that even if I want to be reconciled to God, the way to do it is through communion with my fellow humans. It links up with the African idea of sin, shame and guilt, as I have explained in a previous chapter. The idea that my dealings with the community are completely interwoven with my relationship with God makes sense and appeals to me. This basic conception of the world also empowers me to take part in reconciliation.

The idea that I can expel all kinds of evil and strife may be quite useful in dealing with feelings of guilt or fear. It may be very suitable for reconciliation between human parties. The acceptance model is challenging because it is not a typical Western way to deal with problems. We find adversity and misfortune unacceptable. There may be value in starting to accept what I considered to be unacceptable.

The similarly strange reconciliation model of rebellion does seem quite exciting. There may arise circumstances when the establishment is so unjust and seemingly unshakable that I need to understand Jesus as the divine provocateur and when I may feel called to provoke.

A criterion that I have not expressed explicitly, but have certainly implied, is whether these African inspired models integrate in any way with Christianity. Although these models –

especially the models of acceptance and rebellion – seem very foreign, I believe they do.

This question will be addressed later.

### **6.3 South African Context**

A reconciliation model that can bring about reconciliation to all South Africans has to answer to a whole different set of requirements. *Firstly it must correspond with the beliefs and worldview of South Africans* – and it is exactly this integration that is the problem. We are such a diverse nation that we have no single worldview. The challenge would be to find models that are open enough to reconcile South Africans who see the world very differently. This once again excludes all the models that depend on beliefs in the intermediary ability of ancestors, sacrifices, spirits, and the like. Another possibility would be to find models that are built on the few aspects and beliefs that the majority of South Africans do have in common, particularly our shared humanity, shared recent history and a widely held belief in God.

*A second challenge* would be to choose models that will *transcend our society*, or put differently, break the current deadlock of suspicion, anger and fear that still permeates our society. It sometimes seems that the reconciliation process has run out of steam. A reconciliation model must be strong and imaginative enough to call South Africans to action. It must therefore have a very clear imperative focus.

At the moment we probably need a harmonious, cyclical and structured kind of reconciliation that will bring together not only individuals but the whole society. This reconciliation cannot presuppose a shared culture but only shared living space; if it can start to create a shared culture it would be even better. The requirements set out by South

African religious leaders should be taken very seriously. A suitable model will have to contain elements of truth, confession and forgiveness, of justice, humility and dignity and involve as many actors as possible.

### **6.3.1 Possible models for the South African Context**

It seems to me there are only three reconciliation models that will include all South Africans and truly make a difference to our society. Other reconciliation models – like prayer – may help and even lay the basis for reconciliation, but what I am looking for is models that will give South Africans something to do to make reconciliation concrete and real.

#### **6.3.1.1 Scapegoats to transfer guilt**

The models that require scapegoats are terrible and bloody and even repulsive to many. It is exactly my distaste for this kind of model, envisioned by Anselm, which led to the writing of this thesis. But there is one exception. When the scapegoat voluntarily offers himself or herself for the sake of others, this kind of model seems to have universal appeal. I have already mentioned the myth of Eleguru who sacrificed himself on behalf of the Ijebu-Ode people. There are many Western stories of heroes, rabbis, and monks who did the same. It seems that a story or myth of someone sacrificing himself or herself inspires people to do likewise (Ubruhe, 1996:18-22).

René Girard (1982) offers an explanation for the appeal of these voluntary self-sacrifices. He explored the phenomenon of scapegoats and he made fascinating findings. He says that when a community is faced with a universal threat, they usually attempt to counter it

by identifying an innocent scapegoat (or a few scapegoats). The scapegoat then bears their anger while they come to terms with the problem. He illustrates how this was done to the Jews in Guillaume de Machant's poem, "Judgement du Roy de Navarre", when pestilence threatened France in 1349 and the people reacted by accusing the Jews of poisoning their water and proceeded to massacre them (1982:7-19).

Girard believes that the pattern of scapegoats underlies most of our history and is even reflected in our myths (for example in the myth of Oedipus). He also finds this pattern in the Bible, but with this difference that the Biblical accounts reject and protest against the scapegoatism. Whenever someone is made into a scapegoat in the Bible, his or her innocence is pointed out. This is true of Psalm 35, Isaiah 53, and even more so of Jesus. Jesus is said to be crucified without cause (c f John 15:25, Luke 12:34, John 11; Girard, 1982:125-140).

At the same time, Jesus' death exposes and defeats the pattern of scapegoatism. Jesus becomes the "Lamb of God" and breaks the evil power of scapegoatism (Girard, 1982:221). Thus, according to Girard's thought, it would seem that Jesus gave himself up as a voluntary self-sacrifice, not to appease God's wrath, but rather to enlighten people: to reveal the evil pattern of scapegoatism and in doing so recognise the real causes for their suffering, and to challenge them to take responsibility for their own lives and welfare. Perhaps that is the case with all voluntary sacrifices. The pattern of scapegoatism gets revealed and communities are challenged to accept responsibility for themselves.

Wolfgang Huber (1993:573-591) investigated the ethics of responsibility and collective accountability and concluded that Christians are responsible to and for God, as well as to and for humans. He believes that the genocide of the Second World War should remind

Germans to take responsibility for others. The same would apply to South Africans.

Fortunately, our short shared history in South Africa also records example of self-sacrificing heroes. Among the examples are Nelson Mandela, who sacrificed 27 years of his life in jail, and then emerged forgiving and humble and reconciliatory, people like Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Beyers Naude, and countless others. On the other hand, a case can be made that a lot of the pent up resentment and lack of reconciliation are due to others' unwillingness to sacrifice or accept responsibility for the past. An obvious example is the Apartheid government's unwillingness to take part in the Truth and Reconciliation process (Buthelezi, 1976:180; Maluleke, 2005:1).

People are usually quick to identify scapegoats other than themselves (Connor, 198:83).

Antjie Krog, a journalist who followed the TRC hearings, complains ironically that (1998:13-14):

None of those ever shot by police were ever actually doing anything provocative. The police seem to have shot specifically those who were buying bread. (This is strengthened by the fact that very few MK soldiers came forward as victims). And so the feeling grows that the apartheid struggle was not between racist whites and brave, organised fighters, but rather between brutal white police and innocent black people. Of course, it was like that, runs the official assumption. But this makes no allowance for bravery, for heroes. It only allows for martyrs. And then (since no one's son or daughter was ever, of course, an informer), it is only people who were *innocent* who were ever persecuted by the community or brutally exploited by the regime. ... [And] so we have reached the stage where people like Verwoerd or P.W. Botha have been demonised as the sole sources of evil in the past. They were responsible for all the ugly events of the past, while we are not. Because they are evil or bad, it is self-evident that we are good. They are the devils and we are the angels.

What would happen if South Africans across the board would start sacrificing themselves and their claims for the sake of reconciliation? What would happen if leaders would take responsibility for past (and present) injustices? If truth could be told, confessions made

and forgiveness doled out in a thousand small ways? Wouldn't the dignity of people be restored and humility cultivated?

It could mean that justice would be done. As Van der Kooi (2002:112) pointed out, some sins are too big to be just forgiven. The seriousness of the wrongs of the past must be acknowledged. If leaders and members of society will start taking honest responsibility for the past and sacrifice their own interests, the offenders and the offended will be healed.

Self-offering is at the heart of the Christian message. It stands against evil and violence; the expulsion and sacrificing of others (Milbank, 1997:271). Bosch wrote (1982:26): "the ministry of reconciliation ... [means] that I should be prepared to do *more* than [the other person] did, to go the 'second mile'. If I begin to change, it becomes possible for him to change too".

Another example of accepting responsibility took place during the TRC hearings. Mrs Winnie Madikizela-Mandela is a complex political figure, but in the eyes of many she accepted responsibility for her role in the death of Stompie Seipei. When she testified to her role in the abuses of the Mandela United Football Club, Archbishop Desmond Tutu appealed to her to take responsibility for what happened (Meiring, 1999:300-310; Tutu, 1999:134-135):

I beg you, I beg you, I beg you please – I have not made any particular finding from what has happened here. I speak as someone who has lived in this community. You are a great person and you don't know how your greatness would be enhanced if you were to say, "Sorry, things went wrong, forgive me." I beg you.  
(Tutu, 1999:35)

Madikizela-Mandela probably surprised a few people by taking Tutu's advice:

Thank you very much for your wonderful, wise words. That is the father I have always known in you. I am hoping it is still the same. I will take the opportunity to say to the family of Dr Asvat, how deeply sorry I am; to Stompie's mother, how deeply sorry I am – I have said so to her before a few years back, when the heat was very hot. I am saying it is true, things went horribly wrong. I fully agree with that and for that part of those years when things went horribly wrong and we are aware of the fact that there were factors that led to that, for that I am deeply sorry.

(Tutu, 1999:135)

Meiring (1999:310) recalls:

In the hall there was a commotion. Winnie and Stompie Seipei's mother walked towards one another. Cameras flashed. They took each others' hands and embraced. They made their peace. "Now", Joyce Seipei said, "we can really talk to one another. There are many things that I want to know. We are both women and I know that she also has feelings deep in her heart, but now we must talk".

African reconciliation models often sacrifice justice for the sake of harmony. But there is this very strong strand of thinking that sacrifices may at times be necessary. I believe a model and culture of self-sacrifice may be a powerful option for South Africa.

The requirement that a sacrifice be voluntary is very important to African Women's Theology. These theologians warn that the passion of Christ is often used to domesticate women, boosting the male ego and fuelling male determination to the detriment of the humanity of women. On the other hand, "(Jesus Christ) knew what He was doing. He knew that the liberation of human life depended on his acceptance of the cross. He willingly took it up so that He might become the way to reconciliation and the beginning of a new humanity under God" (Oduyoye, 1998:369, also Johnson, 2002:209; Ubruhe, 1996:18-22).

A voluntary sacrifice works against unhealthy power relations. Vandezande (1998:50-51) says that Jesus did not impose but invite, not coerce but convince, He did not demand mandatory compliance but heartfelt community and voluntary discipleship.

A number of reformed theologians have also tried to soften the idea of a substitutionary sacrifice by emphasising the voluntary aspect of Christ's sacrifice. Subtle substitution holds that: "Living on behalf of another and dying on behalf of another is not against human dignity, and thus not against God's dignity either, because God is a God of humanity" (Van de Beek: 2004:39).

### **6.3.1.2 Expulsion and cleansing**

The model of expulsion is an obvious model. It can be used individually, but as effectively collectively. African reconciliation models teach that strife is like a slow poison that ruins all relationships. This poison must be expelled.

The idea of expelling evil can be presented in a way open enough to be acceptable for all members of our society. And expulsion ceremonies may involve numerous groups in our society. It will also be something that people can do ritually, and keep on doing in many different ways. It will necessarily involve truth-telling and forgiveness and an element of justice will have to be built in.

Many people think that South Africa should have had a "washing of the spears" ceremony ten years ago. It acknowledges the contribution of the warriors, but simultaneously "removes the urge to kill" (Hay, 1998:136).

### 6.3.1.3 Acceptance

The African notion of acceptance can offer a fascinating possibility. Instead of expelling the past, rituals can be devised to accept the past with all its wonder and terror. This may seem dubious to Westerners (the theme of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*); like a kind of *laissez faire* acceptance of evil, but it seems to work in Africa, and can make a difference in South Africa. As in the example of the Chihamba cult, such a reconciliation model can be used to create a new clan for all South Africans to belong to. Imagine a big ceremony where the past is accepted by all and a new South African race or a people are born. It can overcome a lot of our present difficulties. It may diminish truth and justice but it need not be so. And the amount of dignity achieved can make up for it.

Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane (2003:103) explains that the African emphasis on acceptance is thoroughly Christian:

When we refuse to allow difference in our communities and when we ostracize those who are the 'other', we deny ourselves and others the opportunity to be fully human. African culture invites us to embrace the 'other' and to discover a fuller and richer humanity. This understanding of our humanity echoes, of course, the profound insights offered by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which celebrates a loving communion of free, self-determining, creative persons.

Ndungane adds that we now have the opportunity to challenge the exclusivism which prefers men above women, whites above blacks, rich above poor, and straight above gay, because our Triune God invites us to demonstrate that in our very differences, we can embrace one another, celebrating otherness, and discovering our deep, Godly unity in those differences (2003:107).

Paul writes that this has indeed become a possibility through the reconciliation of Christ:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

(Ephesians 2:14-16)

### **6.3.2 Appraisal of Models for the South African Context**

The three models offer interesting possibilities. The strength of the scapegoat model is that it acknowledges injustice. It can bring closure to many people who were offended in the past as well as to their offenders. Its success depends on strong leaders that will start the self-sacrificing process and who can inspire others to follow their example. Another advantage of this model is that it can be an ongoing, self-perpetuating process – which is probably what we need. It also ties in well with our understanding of God's reconciliation through Christ. If the emphasis falls on the voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice, instead of the restoration of God's honour for example, it touches even me!

The expulsion model's strength lies in the ritual. Just as African have used this concept in countless ways, it can be enacted at all sorts of ceremonies. As a ritual, the visual and participatory character will undoubtedly have a lasting effect on those who take part. The challenge will be to involve as many South Africans as possible, though perhaps South Africans who are not of African descent will take some persuasion. In return, the ceremony will offer them a sense of forgiveness and closure. This model is not so far removed from the old Augustinian victory model. We can see Christ as the one who expelled all evil. The African version adds participation.

The acceptance model offers a new possibility. It may hopefully create a new South Africa where people are not categorised by the colour of their skin, their language or tribal loyalties, but first and foremost as South Africans. It can bring about a new culture, a new shared worldview, and a shared dream. There is no classical corresponding reconciliation model for this idea, but still it can be used to explain the work of Christ. The apostle Paul and others frequently express the idea of a new family. Christ can be said to be the founder of a new community.

We probably need all three models, and in this order.