CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

The motivation for my research stems from my deep experience of suffering as an Angolan pastor who – together with my compatriots – has struggled through thirty years of civil war in Angola. Now Angola is experiencing a new era in its history. A new future with new challenges awaits the country and its people. But we also need to face the past. We need to address the problems of the past: the inequalities and injustices that occurred cannot be avoided. The churches have a major role to play in terms of peace, justice and reconciliation because the mission of the church includes helping to build bridges in a divided society. David Bosch, from his South African experience, once wrote about the need for reconciliation: "Our missionary involvement may be very successful in other respects, but if we fail here, we stand guilty before the Lord of mission. Peace-making, I therefore suggest, is a major ingredient" (1991:119).

The time has come to present the Angolan Churches, especially the Anabaptist Mennonite community - the church I serve - with an overview of the recent experiences in South Africa and Angola in terms of peace-making and reconciliation. Against the backdrop of what is happening on a larger scale on the African continent, Christians need to be alerted to the importance of a Ministry of Reconciliation. By developing a suitable model, I hope to inform and empower clergy and laity in my home country in this regard. I am of the opinion that building a new country after war always requires us to evaluate the past, so that we can plan for the future. Hence reconciliation is needed.

2. The Objectives of the Thesis

My objectives will be essentially first to offer Angolans a true understanding of the need for facing the past violence, war and anger among these people, and second to identify the challenges of reconciliation and nation building in our country. We need to promote forgiveness and reconciliation between the *'regressado'* (returning Angolan refugees) and *'shungura'* (those who stayed at home, who consider themselves as the 'genuine' Angolans). The Angolans will need to face the truth of atrocities perpetrated towards their fellow people. Repentance for shedding the blood of innocent people is extremely important for the whole nation: it is one of the keys to a true reconciliation.

I furthermore wish to assist the Protestant Churches' Council, the *Conselho de Igrejas Cristas em Angola* (CICA), and the Alliance Evangelical Church in Angola (AEA) in finding new ways to work together, eventually to become one council of Protestant churches in Angola.

I desire to promote the national effort for a lasting peace, which will lead the country into an era of social progress and development. I do this in the belief that neither social progress nor development is possible in a community where division and power struggles hold sway over the population.

My final aim is help the churches to develop a new, comprehensive definition of mission, a definition that includes the four mandates of *kerugma* (preaching the gospel), *diakonia* (demonstrating the gospel by acts of charity and love), *koinonia* (building up and empowering the communion of believers who truly care for one another as well as for society at large) and *leiturgia* (worshipping God through faithful service). Only by carrying out all four tasks will the Angolan churches be able to fulfill their mandate to be builders of peace and agents of reconciliation.

3. Approach in the Thesis

The first stage of this research comprises an analysis of the socio-political, economic, cultural, and other factors which led Africans in general, and South Africans and Angolans in particular, into acts of discrimination, racism, conflicts, and tension between different groups that eventually cause division and separation.

Secondly, I hope to discover anew the challenge that the Biblical message of reconciliation, contained in both the Old and New Testaments, poses to the churches and the Christian communities worldwide – especially in communities undergoing rapid social and political change.

Thirdly, I endeavour to describe and analyse the South African experience of Truth and Reconciliation, before attempting to apply my findings to the Angolan situation.

Finally, from this analysis, I hope to develop a workable model for a Ministry of Reconciliation that may serve the churches in my home country, Angola, well.

4. Hypothesis

After three decades of civil war, did the Luena Memorandum really lead the country into national reconciliation and healing? In terms of this question I find that by obeying the Biblical imperative of reconciliation, and by carefully observing the South African Truth and Reconciliation process, analyzing its efforts and learning from its results, a model for a Ministry of Reconciliation may be developed that will serve the Angolan churches in their efforts to promote repentance, justice, reconciliation and peace, in the aftermath of three decades of civil war.

5. Methodology

The present study contains a qualitative as well as a quantitative dimension. In terms of the first dimension, I conducted a wide ranging literature review, using all the books, articles, reports and memoranda available that pertain to the subject of my research. Secondly, in terms of

qualitative research, I involved myself in empirical research. With the help of *The Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (IMER)* at the University of Pretoria, I have developed a questionnaire to use in South Africa as well as Angola, in order to obtain the necessary information and to test some of my findings. Numerous theologians, church leaders and members of civil society in Angola as well as South Africa were interviewed. I am undertaking my research from the vantage point of a participant observer who has chosen a participative research approach, interacting with the churches and communities under observation. I am a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Angola, and have been serving the church as a pastor since 1996. I have spent a number of years in South Africa, studying the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, observing reconciliation initiatives in that country. Although a proper distance from my subject will be maintained some of my personal experiences and observations will, of course, surface during my research.

6. Definitions of Terms

The thesis will accord especial attention to the following terms: mission, church, leadership, reconciliation and liturgy. Here I describe how these terms are understood in this study:

6.1. Mission: in this thesis the term mission will refer to Missio Dei (God's Mission) as well as *missio ecclesiae* (the mission of the church). I use a comprehensive definition of mission, incorporating the four facets of: *kerugma* (proclaiming the love of God in preaching); *διακονια* (demonstrating the love of God in many ways – also in standing for peace and justice and in promoting reconciliation); *κοινωνία* (the building up of the church, being the communion of the saints in the world); and *λειτουργία* (worshipping God through our faithful service to Him). Dons Kritzinger has commented: "mission is much more than just proclamation (*kerygma*). It includes at least two other dimensions also, namely the loving serving of those in need (*diakonia*), and the planting and building up of community (*koinonia*)" (Kritzinger 2002:3).

6.2. Church: I regard the church, in this thesis, as the imperfect community of believers, the mystical and lovely body of Christ called to become perfect for its own sake, as well as to help

transform the world to the glory of God. It is, as Lesslie Newbigin wrote: "the bearer of the presence of the kingdom through history, it is surely not as the community of the righteous in a sinful world… it is a sinful community" (1978:59).

6.3. Leadership: Leadership should be understood as guidance and direction, by which the leader and those who are guided walk together. Leadership implies a vision, plan and strategies, which the leaders, in their dealing with people, characterize and demonstrate.

6.4. Reconciliation: Reconciliation is the concept by which two separated individuals, tribes, communities, nations and/or religions come together and accept each other, in order to work together, and to endeavour to solve their differences, bound together by a common motive and by mutually accepted principles. This is the way I understand the Greek terms *καταλαγή* / *καταλλασσω* (reconciliation/ to reconcile). Reconciliation liberates people, as Maake Masango has pointed out: "Reconciliation sets people free, if it does not free people, then it is not the kind practiced by Jesus, and proclaimed by Paul" (2005:134).

6.5. A Biblical Perspective on Reconciliation

Reconciliation is clearly part of the biblical message. It concerns all the relationships that pertain to us: those with God, ourselves, our neighbours and lastly, with nature. To experience complete "*shalom*" (peace) one's relationship with these four dimensions needs to be perfect. Reconciliation is God's redeeming work in bringing back the human being to his/her intimate relationship with the Creator after the fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). The covenant God made with humankind is the central message of the Bible, in which reconciliation is one of the aspects of God's redeeming work on behalf of the whole universe.

This section summarizes the biblical approach to reconciliation. It looks briefly at the Old and New Testament analyses of reconciliation. In the fifth chapter a number of theological and practical implications of the scriptural message of reconciliation will be discussed.

6.5.1. Reconciliation in the Old Testament

The Old Testament does not really express the concept of reconciliation specifically but contains themes related to it, as W.R. Domeris confirms: "Reconciliation in its technical sense as used by Paul is not an Old Testament idea" (1987:77). But investigating the notion in the Old Testament I find that the covenant represents the pattern of and the most important theme related to reconciliation. John W. de Gruchy points this out: "This covenantal relationship of trust between God and humanity expressed in faithful stewardship is the first presupposition of the doctrine of reconciliation" (2002:48). How is covenant related to reconciliation, and why? And how should it be applied? Reconciliation, as any other biblical doctrine, is not isolated but connected to many others. John W. de Gruchy comments on this, showing that reconciliation is "God's saving work" which he compares with a German term, *Versöhnung*, itself linked with salvation, redemption, or atonement (ibid: 45) and furthermore adds that sacrifice, repentance, forgiveness and justice are all inter-connected. Gabriel Abe points to salvation as being the goal of reconciliation as *kerugmatik* mission. He writes: "The feature of the biblical faith is that its fact of salvation is *kerugmatik*. It is a proclamation of the need and means of salvation in God through a divinely schematized historical progression from creation to redemption and salvation" (1996:3).

Covenant in the Old Testament is central and concentrates on the relationship between God and all humankind. The whole of this Testament concerns the covenant, expressed in multi-dimensional rules and commands, so that reconciliation is in fact a covenantal doctrine. De Gruchy writes: " In terms of the legal character of the Old Testament covenant of God (Rom. 3:2 – 6) reconciliation is understood in terms of the Old Testament covenant of God as electing love (cf. Rom. 9: 11, 13; Col. 3. 12)" (2002:54). Redemption or atonement comes about as a covenantal act of God's work to restore the broken relationship with humanity in the garden where the first covenant was unconditionally ratified. Human beings broke it yet God took the initiative to reconcile them to Him (Genesis 3: 9), shedding innocent blood in order to redeem them and bring them back to God (Genesis 3: 21). However, the consequences would burden all humankind from generation to generation. The covenants of God in Eden as well as with Noah in Genesis 9 concern the whole universe. From here the history of the covenant shifts from the universal to the individual realm in the form of one family (that of Abraham), then to a covenant with a whole nation (Israel), subsequently from one nation to all nations through

Jesus Christ and finally to the whole *cosmos* (universe). The covenant that God made with Noah concerns all creatures, the relationship of people with God and human beings with all creatures. In order to maintain the covenantal relationship, various rules and commands are to be found in terms such as sacrifice, mercy, forgiveness, repentance, redemption, justice, and peace, all of which are linked in the doctrine of reconciliation. God is the One who initiated the notion of sacrifice when Adam broke the covenant and He decided to give the humans clothes (to cover their nakedness) (Genesis 3:21). Secondly, when He concluded the covenant with Abraham the greatest time of intimacy with God occurred at the time of the burnt sacrifice (Genesis 15:9). Leland Ryken et al. confirm this by pointing out that the smoking pot and flaming torch passing between the animal carcasses are symbolic of the fact that the covenant is God's alone (1991:177).

Sin causes separation between human beings, God and their neighbours; sacrifice is the way in which the offender receives atonement or makes expiation for his/her sin to God so that the broken relationship will be restored. Blood was an extremely important symbol of atonement. This is clearly seen in the notion of the scapegoat. As Domeris observes: "The dark cloud created by someone's sin requires a cure, a victim or a scapegoat in order to dispel it" (op. cit: 77). The sinner ought to pay with his/her own life for the damage he/she has caused but since he/she has found a substitute God redeems the offender and restores his/her relationships with God and with the entire community. The covenant in the Old Testament should be understood as the means by which God desires to care for us and keep us all close to Himself. Murray has expressed this as follows: "In entering into Covenant with us, God's one object is to draw us to Himself, to render us entirely dependent upon Himself, and so to bring us into the right position and disposition in which He can fill us with Himself, His love and His blessedness" (1898:9).

Likewise, when one enters into the ministry of reconciliation God's object is to draw us to Himself. PM Venter notes the warning in Deuteronomy 13, which stipulates that when a prophet or a close relation or a rebellious city leads people away from the Lord he or she or they have to be put to death (op. cit: 14).

Since Israel was a covenantal community it was vital for them to work towards justice and to maintain a good relationship with God but not in a superficial manner, offering multiple forms of sacrifices and other activities within the temple: those practices would only be helpful if justice were done to all in the nation in the fear of the Lord and for his sake. The Sabbatical and Jubilee laws were instituted to

maintain justice and equal rights in Israel: Leviticus 25:8 expresses a notion connected to reconciliation, as Itumeleng Mosala shows: "*Kippurim* on the other hand, is unambiguously the term for restoration. It is primarily a socio-economic term which conjures up a process of socio-economic and political reconciliation" (1987:24). God's concern is not only for people but also for the environment. God's grace is not cheap but stipulates requirements. The prophets played an important role in proclaiming this issue in Israel's history. Jeremiah for instance condemned injustice, the main cause of the broken covenant, calling for repentance to avoid the exile which was at hand and insisting that the religious activities in the temple would not help to avoid God's wrath and the resulting destruction which Jeremiah described in 7:1 –15 and 26. Justification would be fully achieved in Messianic times where metaphorically reconciliation would go beyond humankind to reach all creatures, as Isaiah saw: "The wolf will live with the lamb, … and a little child will lead them" (Isaiah 11:6). In the same vein Jeremiah perceived the renewal of the covenant (Jeremiah 31) where Israel and Judah would be one united nation and the law for all would be written in their hearts.

6.5.2. In the New Testament

The New Testament clearly discusses reconciliation as such. The preaching of the Kingdom, which characterizes Jesus Christ's ministry on earth, has as its goal the reconciliation of people with God, themselves, and nature. John the Baptist perceived Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Paul will focus on this notion in 2 Cor. 5: 16 – 21 where he reveals that reconciliation is a major and perennial ministry of the disciple in particular and of the Church in general. D.A. Carson, R.T. France et al. consider this text as the theological basis of this particular ministry (1994:1197), while as De Gruchy puts it: "The Church is God's reconciled and reconciling community" (op. cit: 55). This ministry in Paul's understanding is multifaceted, reconciling and uniting all things in heaven and on earth in Christ (Eph. 1: 10).

In New Testament Greek the philology of the term *καταλαγή*

describes a generic reconciliation, which is one of the most important terms, to which many others are linked. Domeris discusses a term such as *αποκαταλλασσω*, used in Ephesians 2:18 where it refers to two antagonistic nations being completely reconciled: the gentiles and the Jews (2007:79). Another term related to *καταλαγή* is the term *διαλλασσω*, a substantive which means to be

reconciliation (ibid: 79); its associated verb is *διαλλασσομαιι* (to reconcile), which refers to the offering that first requires reconciliation with one's fellow-Christian (Matthew 5:24). And the last term, *συναλλασσω* (to reconcile), is to be found in Acts 7:26 where it refers to Moses wishing to bring peace between the two Israelites who were fighting (op. cit.:79). All these terms denote the doctrine of reconciliation in diverse contexts. The rhetorical dimensions of reconciliation have more to do with social contexts but do not limit the doctrine to social concerns only. The term Greek *καταλαγή* is an inclusive, not exclusive, term. According to Itumeleng Mosala in his semantic analysis of the Greek verb, *καταλλασσω* (to reconcile) is technically a composite term, in which the prefix Greek "*κατα*" (to, for) is followed by the Greek verb "*αλλασσω*" (transform and change) in which reconciliation should be understood as "transformation or changes" (op. cit: 23). Mosala perceived reconciliation in connection with the Jewish ceremony of jubilee, of which the restitution of the land to its first owner is the cornerstone. He considers the word *καταλλασσω* as equivalent to the Hebrew word *kaphar*, translated into English as atonement, and gives it the sense of the Hebrew word *Kippurim* to uphold the position of restitution of land and freedom expressed in Leviticus 25 (1987: 24). His analysis is persuasive but I consider that his position regarding restitution calls for a further understanding of God's will in His reconciling work to avoid mistakes. If the land is the main aspect of reconciliation, therefore one should also understand the theology of land from the biblical perspective.

Reconciliation with God is not cheap: it costs lives. In the Old Testament atonement called for sacrifice to be offered according to the gravity of the sin. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is the great priest who sacrifices, not the life of animals, but His own life once for all for the redemption of all humankind (Hebrews 9: 12), as Biema demonstrates (op. cit: 39). Christ died for us while we were still sinners, as Romans reveals (5:8). Reconciliation has to do with our inner relationship with God as individuals and also with "the other", whether a group of people or a society, and/or with God (de Gruchy 2002: 51).

As suggested above, Paul's understanding of *καταλαγή* is more universal: it incorporates the redemption of all creatures because they were also subject to bondage and need reconciliation to be set free

(Romans 8:21). Reconciliation encompasses more dimensions than the bilateral vertico-horizontal dimensions which are well known: multi-dimensions, vertical, horizontal, and so on, and is truly Missio-Dei. For instance de Gruchy refers to reconciliation between the living and the dead in the TRC (op. cit: 65).

6.5.3. Biblical Perspectives during the History of the Church

We are not the first to debate this doctrine. During the history of the Church much attention was devoted to understanding it. Augustine, Anselm and Abelard, as well as the theologians of the Reformation, sought answers to the question: "Why did Christ die?" And the question still arises for the Christian in the 21st century: "what does his death mean to me?" writes David Van Biema (2004:39). Answers to this fundamental question have adopted one of three positions: Christ died as a victory over evil powers; His death is a sacrifice; and He set for us an example to follow.

Augustine of Hippo, according to Biema, argued that Christ's death should be understood as His triumph over evil and the devil. He writes that Augustine described Christ as "a great champion against an evil that is a real and formidable supernatural force – of invisible kingdoms battling above our heads and below our feet" (op. cit.: 40). The argument regarding the debt paid for the deliverance of sinners was linked to the death of Christ, where some church fathers argued that God had paid the ransom to the devil (ibid.: 40); see also (de Gruchy 2002: 59).

For instance, *Anselm* perceived the death of Christ as a payment to the devil. According to De Gruchy, he stresses the satisfaction of the demands of God's justice (2002: 60). Christ died for us to become righteous before God, condemned in order to satisfy God's justice. "For Anselm, the gravity of sin and guilt could only be overcome through paying the penalty for human disobedience and its consequences" (de Gruchy 2002: 60). theologians who perceive extreme violence in the doctrine of sacrifice. This is why the reconciliation ministry, today, has much to do in this 21st century, as a ministry of love not of violence.

For *Peter Abelard*, according to Biema (2004: 41), Christ's death is an example for us, not a sacrifice. "Love answered love's appeal", Abelard wrote. With Jesus' example before it, humanity, its deaf ear reopened, could now gain reconciliation with God (ibid.: 41). This theory is welcomed by some modern theologians who perceive extreme violence in the doctrine of sacrifice. This is why the reconciliation ministry, today, has much to do in this 21st century, as a ministry of love not of violence.

In conclusion, reconciliation spans the Old Testament and the New Testament. While in the former the term is not clearly expressed we find that it is connected with many other concepts like atonement, redemption, restoration, justice, repentance, forgiveness and peace, where bloody sacrifices were essential for redemption from sin. In the New Testament the death of Jesus Christ constitutes the basic theological pattern of the reconciliation ministry that is God's mission. The Church, through her members, is God's instrument to bring fallen humanity back to him. We briefly recounted the views of influential church fathers, remarking that in modern times the meaning of the death of Christ continues to be an important debate among theologians where, for example, child abuse and violence provoke many questions. This is why the following chapters discuss the need for the ministry of reconciliation in Africa with a focus on the South African and Angolan experiences in the light of a biblical model of reconciliation.

7. Research Gap: After an overview of a number of studies of reconciliation, it became clear that this field in the case of Angola has been largely unexplored. One Master's thesis on the field has been written by Afonso Teca promoted by Professor Masamba Mampolo, entitled: *La Guerre de l'Angola et la Crise d' Identite – Quete d'une Pastorale de Reconciliation* (The Angolan War and Crisis of Identity – Quest for a Pastoral of Reconciliation) (Teca 1997). That thesis was orientated toward a pastoral practice of reconciliation with a focus on preaching. The present thesis on the contrary despite its wide scope focuses on the ministry of reconciliation, developing a model which should help to promote repentance and national reconciliation. It compares and observes the TRC experience.

8. Overview of the Thesis

The thesis, including the introduction, consists of six chapters.

8.1. Chapter 1: Introduction

The background of the thesis is discussed, together with notes on the research question related to the objectives, approach, hypothesis, methodology, research gap and on the different terms used in the research.

8.2. Chapter 2: Africa, a continent in need of reconciliation

The chapter draws attention to many issues of tension regarding Africa as a continent of despair, where political, ideological, socio-economic differences, racism, and crimes are discussed as areas of conflict. It also discusses the question of how churches as well as communities of faith are instruments which must play their role in promoting reconciliation in Africa, that is in offering hope for Africa.

8.3. Chapter 3: The South African Experience

The chapter considers the context which gave birth to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), analyses the work of the TRC and looks at the actual South African experiences. Special attention is given to the role of the churches and communities of faith during apartheid (involvement with and struggle against the system) and participation in the TRC, which reveals awaiting challenges that should be addressed. The objective of this approach is to determine how the dynamic of some findings of the TRC could be applied in the Angolan experience.

8.4. Chapter 4: The Angolan Experience

The chapter briefly describes the Angolan history of civil war, which was rooted in colonial history. It presents the three liberation movements and the role of the churches during the civil war, draws attention to the Luena memorandum after Savimbi's death, investigates the case of Cabinda province and identifies challenges that are awaiting the churches and communities of faith.

8.5. Chapter 5: Developing a Ministry of Reconciliation for the Angolan Churches: Theological and Practical Observations

The chapter presents and discusses the model of the reconciliation ministry, both theological and practical. Theologically, *Missio-Dei* is seen as the anchor of reconciliation, which also entails the practical dimension. It examines five perspectives of the reconciliation ministry which are related to the theological dimension: soteriological, Christological, pneumatological, historical and missiological. Practical observations take up four perspectives: Political; cultural; where *ubuntu* (the essence of the human being) and *Tata Nlongi* (catechist teacher), are compared as contextual theologies; sociological; and economic. Churches and communities of faith in ecumenical tune are as well as other institutions as God's instruments, Missio-Dei.

8.6. Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The focus of this chapter falls on the recommendations made, which are divided into four recommendations: To the state; to the churches and communities of faith; a specific recommendation to the Mennonites and a recommendation for further research.