Reconciliation in South Africa: Recent Contributions and the Part African Pentecostalism Can Play

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Abstract

The current socio-political approaches to reconciliation in South Africa are fragile which is evidenced by the high levels of poverty, corruption, and inequalities which cancel the strides taken in the right direction of democratizing and unifying the country. These inadequacies evidence a need to come up with new ideas, particularly from the religious sector, that can play a leading role in enhancing the capacity of these socio-political systems to build reconciled and peaceful communities. Pentecostalism has the potential to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation in our community, therefore this article explores African Pentecostalism as a way of assessing how this tradition can contribute to the transformation of communities, leading to co-existence, reconciliation, and love for the other. To achieve this objective, this study will make use of a systematic review methodology which will involve analyzing selected works written by various scholars on the topic of reconciliation and African Pentecostalism.

Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to learn more about African Pentecostalism as part of the broader Christian tradition by discussing recent developments on reconciliation in this tradition and determining whether the reconciliation ideas in these systems can inform socio-political systems. This article adds its voice to the cause of reconciliation, unity, and justice in modern communities by exploring African Pentecostalism in search of new ideas.

This article responds to the research question, what are the recent scholarly contributions on reconciliation in South Africa and what part can African Pentecostalism play? This research question will be answered with the following steps:

First, the article explores reconciliation to determine how the term is understood from both the secular and religious perspectives. After that, the reasons reconciliation is needed in South Africa and the world at large are explored. The next section looks at the theological, societal, and ecclesiastical relevance of reconciliation. Then the article delves into the characteristics of African Pentecostalism by looking at its worldview. Last of all the article will analyze some recent African Pentecostal scholarship in relation to research on reconciliation and also determine how Pentecostalism can enhance its capability to promote reconciliation and peace.

It is also important to acknowledge that the post-apartheid era saw a sudden surge in research about Pentecostalism with scholars such as Allan Anderson and Maria Frahm-Arp and many others writing extensively on this topic because of the great impact of these churches both locally and internationally. The attention given to these churches was because of their exponential growth and considerable influence on the socio-political spheres in the Global South. This rapid growth in influence coupled with the strategic contextualisation of these African Pentecostal churches necessitates the need to explore their potential to contribute to the cause of reconciliation, unity, and peace in the volatile communities in which they flourish, particularly in the South African context.

2. Defining Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the process of bringing together opposing groups of people or individuals with different ideas, beliefs, and situations so that they become friends again. However, this paper will base its argument on the understanding that reconciliation "is a change of personal relations between human beings or between God and man" which is depicted in biblical passages such as Mathew 5:24, Romans 5:1–11, and Ephesians 2:16 (Robinson 1959). These biblical passages show that humans became alienated from each other and God because of sin, hence Christ came to mend this relationship through the shedding of his blood on the cross. This means that the reconciliation being referred to in these passages is not only relevant to the mending of individual relationships. It also champions the restoration of relationships within communities, countries, natural habitats, and cosmic entities, because all creation was alienated from God through the entry of sin into the world.

Concerning the role of the church as an agent of reconciliation within itself and the community at large, reconciliation is regarded as the calling of the church to spearhead processes of establishing relationships between people with differences, and also to strive for unity within the church at large (van Wyngaard 2020,144). For us to have an idea of what reconciliation is from the Pentecostal perspective—a perspective that is also aligned with the broader Christian view of reconciliation—it is vital to look at how one church defines this term. One congregation of the Salvation Army in Australia in their celebration of the Pentecost

event describes reconciliation as the "coming together of a diverse and divided people" as seen during the day of Pentecost (Whitecross 2020). This means that the Holy Spirit came upon disciples during the Pentecost event (Acts 1:8) to transform them into Christ's likeness in terms of their lifestyle and character (Whitecross 2020). Christ's lifestyle and character are distinguished by his love for all creation to the extent that he had to sacrifice himself to reconcile humans and all creation to each other and God (Col 1:18–22). Critical elements that are visible within the Pentecost event and form part of the Pentecostal theology of reconciliation are Holy Spirit empowerment, transformation, love, and unity in diversity.

To consolidate the Christian understanding of the term *reconciliation*, we should look at the origin of this term. The term is derived from a Greek family of words that emerge from the verb ἀλλάσσω, which means a change in the relationship between individuals or between God and humans. This means that there was some form of tension or enmity between the parties involved in this process hence the need for them to be reconciled to each other (Porter 2006, 132–133). As indicated earlier, the broader understanding of reconciliation indicates that it does not only involve restoring or mending relationships between individuals or between God and humans but also between communities and nations. It is also vital to acknowledge that genuine reconciliation does not simply involve forgiveness, unity, and restitution, but also initiates equality and economic justice. According to John de Gruchy (2002, v–vi), reconciliation for Christians "is the center and perennial test of their faith" because it goes beyond ecclesial harmony and personal piety to encompass the environment, politics, and group relations, making it critical for the restoration of peace and justice.

3. Reconciliation in South Africa and the World

3.1 The need for reconciliation

The initial elation that characterized the end of the apartheid era in South Africa has been short-lived especially with the racial and ethnic disparities in opportunities and income still existing despite all the government efforts to open up businesses and the education sector to non-whites (Magistad 2017). The political leadership succession has also not matched the initial expectation which was a vision for a better South Africa where there is prosperity, equality, and freedom for all. This is mainly due to the reality that "Mandela's leadership and focus haven't been matched by his successors" (Magistad 2017). The recent developments in the country of xenophobia and its associated problems of violence, poverty, and unemployment have created a need to go back to the initial mandate which is enhancing relationships and promoting reconciliation.

Reconciliation is critical because it ensures that past wrongs are redressed and consequently "promotes the idea of a common connected future" (Lederach 1997, 31). However, the need for reconciliation is not only relevant to South Africa but also to the modern global society where there is an increase in wars, conflicts, competition for resources, and divisions. The current war between Russia and Ukraine, the series of military coups in Niger, Mali, Gabon, and other West African countries, and the persistent violence and conflict in the Sahel region bring into perspective the need for reconciliation in the world.

This need for reconciliation in the global society is also echoed by Karen Brouneus (2007, 6) who states that reconciliation has developed into a very important term in recent times due to the increase in conflicts and the critical need for peacebuilding in our communities.

According to Brouneus (2009, 6–7), reconciliation has developed into a critical component "of postconflict peace building rhetoric and practice" because all conflicts are either intrastate or initiated by perpetrators and former enemies. However, after any form of conflict, former enemies or individuals involved in the conflict must be able to live together, hence there is a need for reconciliation. Therefore, it is not surprising that the post-apartheid era in South Africa saw the initiation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) whose central focus was on human rights and the reconciling of warring parties. However, the introduction of human rights as the central focus of the commission without considering critical aspects such as legal justice and economic justice for all has had its side effects.

Richard Wilson (2000, 75–76) describes the disparities between the notions of justice and the rights discourses propagated by TRC and justice articulated in the townships. There is an agreement between different stakeholders, which includes the religious sector and the socio-political spheres, that the rights discourses emphasized by the TRC were based on shared institutional structures and value orientations contrary to justice systems in the townships which have focused on retribution and punishment (Wilson 2000, 75–76). Gail Super (2015, 31) also alludes to this phenomenon in Khayelitsha, a prominent township in Cape Town, where the administration of a formal justice system based on democratic values and human rights enjoys minimal legitimacy. My experience in Johannesburg where I live also shows an increased tendency in recent years for residents to take the law into their own hands when airing their grievances over lack of service delivery or in dealing with cases of crime.

This growing tendency in the local communities indicates some shortcomings of the legal and judicial system because of its emphasis on human rights rather than legal and economic justice. This unbalanced approach where the voices of those on the margins are not adequately adhered to, is a legacy of the TRC. The shortcomings within the legal and judicial system have given birth to a divergent system in the townships which is contrary to the nominal notion inculcated by the TRC and the acquired democratic values in South Africa. This somehow explains the rise in violence and xenophobic attacks in the townships where residents take matters into their own hands to deal with the problems of crime, unemployment, poverty, and economic injustice prevalent in the country. This also depicts the lack of confidence in the socio-political approaches to unity, reconciliation, and justice, which do not pay heed to the voices of those who live on the margins.

This retributive criminal justice system which is prevalent in the local townships can be attributed to the unresolved anger against the government's reluctance to solve the lingering problems of the influx of immigrants, who are accused of taking away jobs from locals, and economic injustice and poverty because of high inflation rates. However, it is also regarded as a legacy of the Roman-Dutch law which was at work during the apartheid era (Velthuizen 2016). This law resulted in the division of people into different racial, ethnic, and tribal groups, and belonging to a particular group determined what a person could have access to in terms of place of residence, education, recreation, and health facilities. In short, this old Roman-Dutch law facilitated what is referred to as a *divide-and-rule* strategy, hence preventing the manifestation of unity in diversity in these communities.

According to Velthuizen (2016), the solution to dealing with the invisible law of retribution at work in the communities is accommodating "indigenous African legal practices" within the socio-political discourses, which are more reconciliatory and participatory. The reconciliatory and participatory nature of African indigenous justice systems is vested in

the understanding that "African culture is built on the values and virtues of interdependence and communality of the community members" (Mekonnen 2010, 101).

According to Mekonnen (2010, 101), African traditional legal systems include critical aspects for bringing reconciliation in communities such as truth-telling, healing, accountability, and "mechanisms for acknowledgement." Reconciliation, as spearheaded by TRC, has in recent years been linked to some form of injustice because of the way Caucasian privileged groups have used it to maintain their status quo. However, its potential to engage different sides of the conflict "promote open expression of the painful past, build lasting relationships and enhance interdependence" (Lederach 1997, 26, 30) meaning that its values are critically needed in our modern society (Gibson 2002, 541). Indigenous African legal systems can be incorporated into the socio-political ideologies as spearheaded by the TRC. Then it can play a leading role in the cause for unity and reconciliation and help heal fragile communities awash with violence, xenophobia, and divisions.

Furthermore, the great need for the healing of communities due to rising conflicts and divisions and the complexity of the problems that our modern society is facing also entails reflecting more on the understanding of reconciliation to realize its full meaning and effectiveness. This means that restorative justice, despite its effectiveness in healing political or personal relationships through critical elements such as amnesty and forgiveness, cannot be compared to the richness that can be attributed to the term reconciliation itself. Genuine reconciliation goes beyond restorative justice because it entails listening to the voice of those on the margins, allowing equal participation for all, and infusing critical aspects such as equality, unity in diversity, and legal and economic justice. According to Ilwad Elman (UN Security Council 2019), an official at the

Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia, reconciliation's effectiveness in modern societies can be enhanced by making sure reconciliation processes are inclusive (involving all sectors), "locally owned and based on social and economic reforms."

3.2 The current status of reconciliation in South African

In the current South African context reconciliation is understood in various ways, with some merely thinking of it as *forgiveness*, while others hold that *transformation* has to form part of it. These varying views on reconciliation have presented huge challenges for researchers because there have been some misunderstandings and it is not clear how to measure progress with reconciliation (Harrison 2022). Van Wyngaard (2020, 146) also notes some ambiguity with the "language of reconciliation" used by the respondents in his 2019 survey among young Dutch Reformed ministers. A number of the clergy who participated in the survey name reconciliation as one of the current ecclesial priorities and something the church has to work towards (van Wyngaard 2020, 145–146).

Indeed, some mention reconciliation as a priority of the church in a church that is still regarded as racially divided and have been engaging confidently in activities that they regard as part of the reconciliation process. However, that these activities are mere social activities means that there is a challenge in the way reconciliation is understood. Many churches within South Africa, even among Pentecostal churches, are still homogenous. There is also still a lack of concerted effort from its members to deal with the racial divisions within the church itself and the community. These facts serve as a sign that there is a serious problem in the way most of the people in South Africa understand reconciliation. However, some naming reconciliation as a priority of the church in the

survey conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church in 2019 indicates an awareness of this problem. Nevertheless, just recognizing the challenge without understanding what the term reconciliation means adds to the problem because it opens the possibility of some people reading their own meaning into the term. This lack of understanding of what reconciliation means is a challenge because it poses a threat to the building of reconciled and peaceful communities.

By constructing a biblical perspective on reconciliation, we can iron out this problem of different people reading their own meaning into the term *reconciliation*. We can also focus on a common cause to deal with the challenges of divisions, violence, and xenophobia ravaging our local communities. Elements such as corruption, racism, inequality, economic injustice, looting of government resources, and xenophobia are depicted in the Bible as sins, and these are responsible for broken relationships in our communities. This realization is key in dealing with the challenges South Africa is currently facing. Therefore, if these sinful elements within our societies are dealt with it can go a long way in restoring broken relationships between people and between God and people. Christ's work on the cross dealt with sin (Col 2:14) and he invites us to imitate his character and lifestyle through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is critical in helping us build a reconciled and peaceful society.

A survey done by the South African Reconciliation Barometer in 2019 clearly indicates that South Africa is still a divided society with 77% stating that reconciliation still needs to happen (Harrison 2022). In this survey two-thirds of the respondents did not express satisfaction with the TRC, with many considering its work as simply the starting point (Harrison 2022). This survey indicates the critical need for reconciliation in the country and the church must not be left out in this project of building a peaceful nation.

4. Theological and Ecclesiastical Relevance of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a term that has its roots in the religious sphere. This understanding is also echoed by Vorster (2018, 1) who states that reconciliation has its origin in the Christian tradition, and it is immensely inculcated in its theology. Reconciliation has a broader theological relevance despite some religious scholars restricting it for many years to systematic theology and the spiritual, mystical, and pious experiences of Christians. As indicated earlier, the biblical foundations of reconciliation are depicted by biblical passages on the alienation of all creation from God through sin and how God sought to reconcile humans and all creation to himself through Jesus Christ, as indicated in Ephesians 2:14–22. In this biblical text, Christ is referred to as our peace because he was able to break down the walls of hostility by breaking down the barrier that existed between Jews and Gentiles, thus creating one new man in himself. Christ represented us before God hence reconciling all creation to God. The Pauline corpus makes this biblical foundation of reconciliation more clear, particularly in Colossians 1:15–23, Ephesians 2:13–16, Romans 5:8–11, and 2 Corinthians 5:17–21. There the eschatological, spiritual, and social dimensions of reconciliation are captured (du Plessis 2017, iv). Understanding the theological meaning and implications of reconciliation as a concept that deals intrinsically with mending broken relationships and enhancing social cohesion makes it possible to situate its relevance within the socio-political spheres.

However, translating the theological meaning of reconciliation into a socio-political context is not a simple endeavor because it involves captivating "the social relevance of divine reconciliation" by incorporating both justice and liberation (Vorster 2018, 1–2). This entails understanding

what the concept of reconciliation means and how it can be applied effectively in socio-political contexts. The common argument for the social relevance of reconciliation as a theological concept is that it reflects on the core value of religion which is the reconciliation of God to humans and human beings one to another. However, reflecting on the theological implication of reconciliation entails going beyond simply recognizing it as a core component of religion by acknowledging and implementing its pedagogical dimensions such as cultural, economic, and political liberation for all people.

In articulating the liberating dimension of reconciliation, Emmanuel Katongole (2017, 10) states that reconciliation is not a one-time event but rather a journey "which is experienced as liberating, but also agonizing, and quite often frustrating." Katongole uses transformative pedagogy not only to illustrate the primacy of reconciliation in biblical texts but also to argue for the understanding that reconciliation is a gift that must be embraced and also shared, thus Christians are encouraged to participate in such a unique epistemology. This means that Christians are invited to be ambassadors of peace and reconciliation in a world torn by conflict, violence, and war. A transformative pedagogical approach is critical, otherwise the endeavor of promoting reconciliation risks being socially relevant but having nothing tangible or unique to offer to the socio-political spheres (Solomons 2020, 1).

A transformative pedagogical approach is particularly relevant in the South African context where the problem of reconciliation is quite complex because of the many tiers of social divisions that need to be subdued. This pedagogical approach also involves using research from different disciplines and experiences in order to make informed decisions on how to deal with the problems of divisions affecting the local communities. This is the reason why scholars speak of true or real reconciliation as an alternative to shallow or cheap reconciliation that simply seeks to maintain a status quo because it attends to the different dimensions and dynamics of reconciliation (Solomons 2020, 2).

Despite the roots of reconciliation being ultimately embedded in Christian theology, the church needs to come up with practical strategies to engage with society (van der Merwe 2003, 269). This means that the church has much to do to convert its potential as a reconciliation agent into reality. The need for the church to reflect critically on reconciliation is great given the wars, violence, divisions, and economic injustice engulfing our modern society. What makes the church in South Africa a powerful force and an instrument of reconciliation is "its ability to reach a large portion of the population" coupled "with its moral influence" in the society (van der Merwe 2003, 272). However, there is a need for the churches to be more organized, coherent, and coordinated in their reconciliatory work within themselves and outside to enhance their role as critical players in the reconciliation process in our communities.

Johannes Knoetze (2022, 1) speaks of concepts such as "'transformative leadership' and 'radical transformation' at all levels and in all spheres" within the church as a critical remedy that can position it to contribute to the transformation of Africa into a global superpower in the future. Some of the resources endowed within the church's discourses include New Testament themes such as justice and reconciliation, which "present a potentially transformative approach towards developing Africa" (Knoetze 2022, 1). This transformative force is necessary given the inequalities, disruptions, and pain caused by the apartheid era which remains unhealed despite the country ushering in the new democratic government thirty years ago.

According to Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice (2010, 18), secular methods of peacemaking or reconciliation are inadequate. The church has

also not fulfilled its role as an active stakeholder or agent in the global reconciliation process, so there is a need for the church to wake up and play its part. Archbishop Desmond Tutu in describing the role of religion in the reconciling process stated that religion plays a vital role in the reconciliation process hence "we need to reach the deep spiritual wells of our different religious traditions" to draw grace and strength to deal with the challenges of nation building and healing (Meiring 2015, 14). Despite these words being echoed 25 years ago, their fulfillment is yet to be realized because the spiritual wells of religion have not been adequately explored. Traditions such as African Pentecostalism are being undermined or overlooked, so they are not used as a source of ideas and perspectives. The increasing violence, riots, racism, and xenophobia in South Africa in recent years clearly indicate the need to explore new avenues and for new reflections on what reconciliation means.

5. African Pentecostalism

According to Nimi Wariboko (2017, 1), African Pentecostalism refers to how Africa bears "witness to itself" and expresses itself in Pentecostalism "in an African context." Wariboko (2017, 1) takes note that much of the research about African Pentecostalism has been focused on defining African Pentecostalism. This was done without paying much attention to its spirituality or religiosity as shaped by certain external agencies such as political developments, African indigenous practices, economic exigencies, other Christian traditions, and the gospels (2017, 1). In line with Wariboko's views, it must be indicated that understanding African Pentecostalism in totality involves understanding the dynamics of African indigenous spirituality, way of life, and values that have been neatly infused into the discourses of these churches.

Marius Nel (2019, 1) adds to this dimension of African Pentecostalism as propagated by Wariboko by discussing the narrative of African Pentecostalism. This narrative is concerned with offering solutions to the societal and personal problems that its adherents face which are assumed to be caused by spiritual and cosmological forces fighting against human progress. Such a spiritualized worldview is exuberated by an African indigenous perspective of "rulers, authorities, evil powers, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces in the heavenly realm" which interferes with the physical world either to enhance progress or cause harm (Nel 2019, 1). Despite African Pentecostal churches manifesting a concoction of indigenous customs, values, and theologies as expressed in African-lived Christianity, it still shares a similar identity with other Pentecostal churches in other parts of the world that can be distinguished from other church traditions by placing emphasis on Holy Spirit baptism, endorsing glossolalia, practicing spiritual gifts as depicted in 1 Corinthians 12:1–13, and adopting a born again perspective of salvation from John 3:3. The emphasis of African Pentecostal churches on the power of the Spirit is intertwined with the Pentecostal approach to reconciliation which is signified by the Pentecost event in which different people (ethnicity, gender, status, tribes) came together to worship God and were endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are different types of African Pentecostal churches depending on whether they are more inclined to classical Western Pentecostal ideas or African traditional religion and how they respond to different problems that ravage the continent. Examples of African Pentecostal churches include neo-Pentecostal churches, classical Pentecostal churches, Prophetic churches, and Pentecostal type African Initiated Churches.Other Pentecostal scholars such as Anderson (1992, 95)

have assigned different names to these three categories or types of Pentecostal churches: Classical Pentecostal Churches are regarded as Pentecostal mission churches, Neo-Pentecostal churches are regarded as Independent Pentecostal Churches, while Pentecostal type African Initiated Churches and New Prophetic Pentecostal Churches are regarded as "indigenous Pentecostal type churches." According to J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2016, xxxi), the typology neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic churches has three sub-categories which are "the new urban centred Charismatic prosperity-oriented churches, transdenominational fellowships and renewal movements within historic mission denominations."

6. African Pentecostalism and Reconciliation

6.1 The contribution of African Pentecostal scholars

In this section of the article, I would like to analyze the recent contributions of some Pentecostal scholars on the issue of reconciliation. On the relation between African Pentecostalism and reconciliation, some important issues need to be considered. They are the necessary prerequisites for a successful reconciliation process and the role of the Holy Spirit in maintaining and restoring relationships within faith communities as well as between groups of people from different religious traditions, faiths, and backgrounds. This focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation is relevant because of the Pentecostal emphasis on spiritual experiences and the baptism of the Spirit, which serves as its identity (Macchia 2010, 44–45). According to Tony Richie (2009), a member of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, a biblical narrative that depicts Pentecostal perspectives on interfaith and interreligious forgiveness and reconciliation is Luke 9:55. In this verse Jesus Christ forbade his disciples from calling down fire from heaven to destroy their competitors when faced with tension, sectarian strife, and racial and religious prejudice. According to Richie (2009), Jesus's response in this situation "wills forgiveness and reconciliation among rival religions" and people of different backgrounds and indicates that "the Spirit he has given to his disciples" also ought to unquestionably "guide us in the same direction."

Despite this explicit forbidding of revenge and the call for reconciliation in the biblical narrative, Pentecostals were only open to this racial and ecumenical unity for the first few years before discarding the idea "in a grave act of disobedience to the Spirit's leading" (Richie 2009). This explains why there has been a call within Pentecostalism in recent years for the recovery of its inclusive and ecumenical theologies that characterized its modern foundations in the early twentieth century. According to Paul Alexander, this exploration of history, as led by the Holy Spirit, also extends to the recovery and restoration of a myriad of practices that characterized early Pentecostalism such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and confronting the injustices of economic disparity, sexism, and racism, prophetically (Mittelstadt and Sutton 2010, ix–x).

This quest to recover practices that characterized early Pentecostalism which included elements of confronting injustices and peacebuilding is not surprising given the wider scope of reconciliation. In African theologies, the recent quest for reconciliation has taken different forms depending on the context in which it has been used. Some African theologians have taken reconciliation to mean liberation and solidarity because of the oppressive circumstances in which their theology developed and owing to their understanding that God shows solidarity with his people in their problems or struggles. Others have linked reconciliation to healing and ecology because of the way they see

Jesus as the healer, and the relationship "with and healing of nature" as a critical part of reconciliation (Meiring 2005, 75, 80). Concerning liberation, there are different levels of liberation which include spiritual liberation, economic liberation, and political liberation. During the apartheid era, the focus of reconciliation endeavors in the South African context was mainly political liberation and solidarity, hence the theological discourses at that particular time delved into global campaigns aimed at sensitizing and publicizing "the situation in South Africa and supporting the movement for freedom" (Reddy 2004). It also included strategies on how the country could be released from the oppressive regime so that it could embrace the values of unity, co-existence, love, and reconciliation.

However, the post-apartheid era has seen a shift from an emphasis on political liberation to economic liberation. Pentecostalism has not been spared from this drastic shift in the understanding of reconciliation with many of the sectors in this tradition emphasizing economic justice for the poor in society and spiritual liberation which takes the form of healing and economic prosperity of its adherents. Recent years have also seen the growth in theological activism for ecological stewardship within Pentecostalism. For example, Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo (2014, 197) implores Christians "to respond to the complex environmental challenges [of] Africa" by exploring "the attitude and responses of Ghana's Charismatic churches, as a case study of neo-Pentecostal responses to Ghana's environmental challenges." To have a detailed understanding of how the understanding of reconciliation has taken a twist to refer to different ways of restoring cordial relationships between humans (horizontal), between humans and the rest of creation, and between humans and God, there is a need to explore how some Pentecostals have defined reconciliation in recent years.

In her study on the role of the Pentecostal movement in reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda Josephine Sundqvist (2011, 171) states that this movement defines "reconciliation efforts as a process" rather than a standalone or isolated activity. This means that the Pentecostal movement regards reconciliation as a roadmap to the healing of divisions and restoration of relationships in situations where there has been strife, hatred, abuse, segregation, racism, and xenophobia. Reconciliation in this case does not simply mean overlooking or ignoring the wrongs that were done but allowing elements of forgiveness, repentance, transitional justice, and reparation to form part of the whole process. Volf (2001, 36) regards the type of reconciliation where the crimes committed are overlooked or undermined as "cheap reconciliation."

According to Langley (2014), Volf emphasizes the vitality of memory in dealing with diverse kinds of conflict. This means that remembering truthfully, hopefully, responsibly, and "in reconciling ways" makes it possible for us not to become what we suffered and not to allow the wrong done to us to dominate us (Volf 2006, 1–2). This approach enables us to consider what effects our remembering will have on other people and to acknowledge that Christ died for us all because we are all sinners (Langley 2014). This practically means that the realization that Christ died for all humankind and forgave us all our sins so that we can become a single loving community should prompt us to imitate Christ by channeling that forgiveness to those who have wronged us as well (Woods 2014).

Volf alludes to an overemphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation without considering particular factors that can enhance these processes. Sundqvist (2011, 167) also notes some of the shortcomings in the strategy used by the Pentecostal movement in the reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda. These include "strong emphasis on perpetrators to be forgiven, and less focus" on the "survivors' ability to forgive crimes against their own families." These shortcomings can also be attributed to the

TRC in South Africa which is thought to have focused more on granting amnesty without considering reparations (Tuazon 2019). According to Tuazon (2019), the ultimate success of TRC was hampered by its failure to get involved in the process of economic and social transformation, which is supposed to be a critical component for the reconciliation process to succeed. Spiritual transformation is also vital in the reconciliation process because forgiveness and reconciliation are divine attributes. This can only be made possible when God transforms people through his Spirit in the process of repentance and salvation so that they can depict his divine values of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Kärkkäinen 2013, 368).

Agrippa Khathide, referenced in Meiring (2005, 71), a pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission, a Pentecostal church in South Africa, provides a helpful description of this. He describes reconciliation as the deliverance of people from evil, an aspect that is depicted by Christ's victory on the cross when he "defeated the devil once and for all." He adds that there is a need for Christian teachings and theology to reflect on this defeat of evil by Christ and highlight "the reality of the dangers of the spirit world" (Meiring 2005, 71–72). In African Pentecostalism, evil spirits are invisible enemies of human beings that are responsible for the misfortunes that many African societies face in the modern world such as poverty, financial struggles, ill-health, and conflicts. Therefore, reconciliation is regarded as deliverance from these ills caused by evil spirits. Khathide's definition of reconciliation aligns with the African traditional religious views which depict an over-consciousness of the spirit world and emphasize the danger that this other world poses to humanity.

Although there is an intersection between Khathide's views on reconciliation and the African traditional religious views concerning the consciousness of the spirit world, the idea of what sin is and what constitutes evil spirits differs between these two religious traditions.

African traditional religion regards sin as simply the disturbance of the rhythmic cycle of life which is different from the biblical notion of sin (Meiring 2005, 71). African Traditional Religions also consider ancestral spirits as useful to the well-being of mankind hence they are supposed to be appeased. However, the broader part of Pentecostalism considers them as evil and a threat to the survival of humankind. The need for reconciliation in African Traditional Religion is necessitated by the persistence of these prevailing disturbances which affect the smooth cycle of life.

6.2 How can African Pentecostalism aid peace and reconciliation?

Religion has always been known to have certain standards of moral behavior, values, and customs hence fostering peace, love, and reconciliation comes naturally as one of its priorities. Even in the Old Testament biblical narratives where wars and violence were the order of the day, we notice "how God worked to preserve his non-violence ideal as much as possible" by consistently "reminding his people not to place any trust in the sword, but rather place" their trust in him (Boyd 2017).

Pentecostalism, like any religious movement, has the potential to positively impact social issues, including peace and reconciliation, as we have already noticed in the past sections. This means that Pentecostal theology emphasizes the importance of justice, mercy, and forgiveness, which can promote reconciliation and peace-building efforts. However, it is also important to be aware that certain forms of Pentecostalism may also promote exclusivism and intolerance, particularly towards those who do not conform to their beliefs, which can potentially lead to violence and division. One way to ensure that Pentecostalism can enhance its capability to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation is to emphasize the

positive aspects of the faith and to actively work towards building bridges between different communities. This can be achieved through dialogue, community service, and humanitarian aid efforts. I believe these elements are still lacking in this tradition.

Furthermore, it is essential to encourage critical thinking and engagement with theological ideas among Pentecostals to promote a nuanced understanding of their faith, reduce the potential for extremist behavior, and guard against diverting from its original values. This can safeguard against rigid dogmatism that has characterized many traditional churches.
In conclusion, Pentecostalism has the potential to be used as an instrument of peace and reconciliation in our community. However, this potentiality can be enhanced through its willingness to go back to its original values which involve promoting positive values, practicing dialogue across dividing lines, and encouraging critical thinking among its followers.

7. Way Forward and Conclusions

This paper brings into perspective how the Christian tradition in general and African Pentecostalism specifically have understood reconciliation, which brings into focus some shortcomings and a comprehensive understanding of the term. Understanding the comprehensive perspective of reconciliation unveils its true meaning and impact which takes into consideration its social, economic, legal, and restorative justice dimensions. What is of particular importance is also how the paper articulates the theological and social relevance of reconciliation by tracing the Christian roots of the term and how understanding this relevance is critical in grasping the role of religion in building peaceful communities in the South African context.

The African Pentecostal identity, African Pentecostalist scholarship on reconciliation, and African Pentecostalism's potential to be an instrument of reconciliation and peace were explored in the last three sections. This was critical since it is a Christian tradition that has long been considered apolitical, futuristic, and otherworldly (Mochechane 2014, 1–2). This exploration is vital in understanding how the tradition is experiencing a drastic shift in its theological stance in such aspects in recent years. This reflection indicated the need for a turn towards its foundation values of unity, inclusivity, tolerance, and love for the other depicted in the Pentecost event at Azusa Street (The Faith Project 2003, 9). This turn by the African Pentecostal tradition towards its original values, if enhanced further and sustained, can be vital in building a reconciled and unified society.

This theoretical exploration of the different views that the Pentecostal tradition holds on what reconciliation is and the role that the Pentecostal movement has played in the process of reconciliation in several contexts opens doors for further research in this aspect. Various empirical research works have been done in recent years to determine the role of religion in dealing with violence and conflict in our modern society. However, little attention has been given to African Pentecostalism as a critical player in this credible venture which paves the way for more empirical work to be done on how African Pentecostalism can contribute to this cause.

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