

Reconciliation between the BCSA and the BUSA from a Biblical Perspective

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Abstract

This article is based on ethnographic work conducted between the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) and the Baptist Convention Southern Africa (BCSA) in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. The two Baptist churches share the same historical background and presuppositions concerning the Bible. They were once affiliated with each other in the context of apartheid policies and regulations. BCSA was for Black people, while the BUSA was for White people. During the merger discussions of the 1980s the two bodies separated and some black members of the BCSA joined the BUSA while some opted to remain with the BCSA and ended affiliation with the BUSA. This process caused huge bitterness between the two organisations especially among the Black members. After the inauguration of the democratically elected government in 1994, the new government introduced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was to facilitate reconciliation in a hurt and divided society. The BUSA and BCSA also embarked on the road to reconciliation and unity. A variety of reconciliation meetings and fellowships took place between the two organisations. It appears that from point of view of the national leadership of the two organisations reconciliation has been achieved but ethnographic work suggests that some members of the two churches in the Eastern Cape are still at loggerheads and still have not forgiven and reconciled with each other. This article identifies the concept of reconciliation as one of the major theological themes fundamental to the Christian faith. In particular I look at how Paul illustrates this concept, especially in the book of 2 Corinthians. As a result, the two churches, especially in the Eastern Cape, are persuaded to reconsider their faith and the meaning of reconciliation as seen by the New Testament.

Introduction

When I proposed writing a book on reconciliation, most institutions rejected my manuscript, arguing that reconciliation is one of the concepts Christians do not want to hear or talk about. They explained that Christians would rather read about God's blessings, prosperity, evangelism, church growth, etc, than issues that expose their brokenness, such as the need for reconciliation. I have engaged with the topic of Biblical reconciliation because I regard it as being at the core of Christian faith and Christian existence.¹ Reconciliation is the concept that truly defines Christian relationship with God and other human beings. The Baptist Convention of Southern Africa (BCSA)

¹ H. Russel Botman, *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*. (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 7.

and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA)² were once affiliated with each other and are still individually affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance which is one of the International bodies where Baptists in the world fellowship together. These two Baptist churches are known and refer to themselves as the 'people of the book', implying that their doctrine is extracted from the Bible and that they live by its teachings. They also share the same presuppositions concerning the Bible and they are part of the broader Christian group called Evangelicals.³ The kind of affiliation they once had reflected the terms and conditions of the apartheid government and its policies where non-White people were not equal with White people.⁴

The BUSA was for White people and considered a 'mother' body and the BCSA, which was for Black people, depended on the BUSA for financial resources and pastoral salaries.⁵ After the unsuccessful merger discussions of the 1980's there was a change in the two churches. Some black members and ministers of the BCSA joined the BUSA, and those who remained with the BCSA opted to be independent of the BUSA and cut all affiliation with the BUSA.⁶ This process caused major pain and resulted in a legacy of bitterness, especially at the local church level and among black people. For example in one of the churches in the Eastern Cape (Njwaxa Baptist Church) the church was divided into two groups during the same service. BCSA members sat on one side and BUSA members sat on the other, and none wanted to give up the building.⁷ During my ethnographic study I found that some pastors in the Eastern Cape (EC) had not spoken to or even greeted each other since the

² From this point on, reference is made to the churches by their acronyms, BUSA and BCSA. In some cases, reference is made to the churches simply as 'Union and 'Convention' as these terms are known more commonly by their congregants.

³ Baptists as Evangelicals are a Protestant group that emphasizes the belief that every person must accept Jesus as Lord and as personal Saviour. The only way to escape from sin is to repent and receive Jesus. Their emphasis is on repentance from sin and they have been known for using tent campaigns. One of the well-known Evangelical preachers is Billy Graham in the USA.

⁴ Luvuyo Ntombana and Adam Perry, "Exploring the Critical Moments When the Baptist Denomination Divided: Does Revisiting These Moments Give Hope to Reconciliation Between the 'Union' and 'Convention?'" *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (March 2012): 3.; Terry Rae, *Baptist History in South Africa*. Paper presented at the Baptist World Alliance in Seoul, Korea (July 2004): 1.

⁵ Peter Mhlophe, "The Effects of Apartheid on Baptist Convention Pastors in South Africa", in Des Hoffmeister and Brian J. Gurney, eds., *The Barkley West National Awareness Workshop: An Empowered Future*, (Johannesburg: Awareness Campaign Committee of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, 1990), 55.

⁶ Luvuyo Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process Between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union of South Africa." (MTh Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 2007), 56.

⁷ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .", 114.

conflict arising out of the unsuccessful merger talks of the 1980's.⁸ Members who joined the BUSA considered the BCSA members who chose to be independent of the BUSA too ambitious and making a politically motivated decision, while those who remained with the BCSA considered the others as traitors who sided with White people.

In the 1990's when a democratically elected government took over in South Africa, a reconciliation opportunity was given, facilitated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The national and regional structures of the BUSA and BCSA took the opportunity by facilitating and encouraging various reconciliation meetings. Some BUSA and BCSA members have testified that the reconciliation initiatives helped them to come to terms with the past and indeed, they forgave and were reconciled with their brothers and sisters. The findings of my ethnographic work conducted in 2007 and 2009 suggest that the majority of the old members of the two churches in the Eastern Cape are still battling with the past and have not taken steps towards reconciliation.⁹

The Pauline Concept of Reconciliation

This section of the article explores the Pauline concept of reconciliation and argues that, according to this New Testament teaching, it is compulsory for Christians to work towards and seek reconciliation with all humankind and with each other. It further argues that this is not a request but a command for those who claim to have been reconciled with Christ. The BUSA and BCSA members who still live at enmity with each other are urged to demonstrate their faith by confessing and forgiving each other in order for true reconciliation to take place. The main source for this study will be the New Testament, though some references will be extracted from the Old Testament in order to trace this concept through the Judea-Christian literature. A particular focus will be on how Paul conceptualises reconciliation. This involves a discussion on how Paul uses this term in his letters in conjunction with Christ's work of reconciliation. A study of the background of Pauline concept of reconciliation yields four principles of reconciliation. The study then describes how the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape Province integrated these four principles in their own reconciliation just as the TRC did during the reconciliation process in South Africa as a whole.

There are basically two reasons for focusing on Paul rather than other NT writers: his immense contribution to NT theology, and reconciliation is one his major themes, in parallel with and equivalent to justification.¹⁰

⁸ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... ", 89.

⁹ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... ", 123.

¹⁰ Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 67.

1. The Background of the Pauline Concept of Reconciliation

Scholars have different views regarding the background of the Pauline concept of 'reconciliation'. Some believe that 'reconciliation' with its cognates is of Pauline origin; others argue that Paul borrowed it from Hellenistic literature, and still others think that Paul adopted it from the Old Testament.

Those who argue that the concept of reconciliation is of Pauline origin state that this term is not found in the Old Testament or Jewish traditions.¹¹ Breytenbach argues that there is no evidence of a religious usage of this terminology in atheistic, pagan or Hellenistic literature. Paul might have borrowed it from the secular world and transformed its basic diplomatic terminology for use in the realm of religion.¹² The term was used most prominently for peace treaties in politico-military contexts, where in order to achieve reconciliation in a period of war or mutual hostility, a general amnesty was arranged. The result was that hostility would be changed to friendship.¹³

Those who argue that Paul borrowed this term from the Hellenistic literature, state that "reconciliation" (*καταλλαγε*), as used by Paul (2 Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22) was a word used for monetary exchange in the Hellenistic world. It meant "the making of what one has into something other" or, by extension, one becomes a new person by exchanging places with another.¹⁴

The scholars who argue that Paul took this term from the Old Testament, stress that the term "reconciliation" has a strong OT background, referring to the action of God who reaches out to his people in order to end enmity between them. Paul might have developed this term from the fourth servant song of Isaiah (52:13-53:12).¹⁵ This point of view is supported by parallels between Isaiah 52:13-53:13 where the death and suffering of Jesus as the Messiah makes humankind righteous and gives them peace¹⁶, and 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 where the sinless Christ's vicarious death is affirmed as the source of God's justification and reconciliation of human beings to himself.

The last view does not necessarily oppose the above views but argues that, irrespective of where Paul got or adopted that term, Paul writes from his personal encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. To support this view, Kim points out that:

¹¹ William Gentz, *Dictionary of the Bible and Religion*. (Abingdon: Nashville, 1986), 323.

¹² Cillers Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", in W.S. Vorster, ed. *Reconciliation and Reconstruction: Creative Options for a Rapidly Changing South Africa*. Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium of the Institute for Theological Research (UNISA) held at the University of South Africa in Pretoria on 3 and 4 September 1986. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1986), 8.

¹³ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 10.

¹⁴ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 3.

¹⁵ Ntombana, "*An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .*",

¹⁶ Kenneth D. Litwak, "The Use of Quotations from Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in the New Testament." (*JETS* 26/4 1983), 385-386.

Whether Paul found this term from the Old Testament tradition or diplomatic sphere, his formulation of God “reconciling” human beings to him is unique and profound. He developed his term out of his theological reflection on his personal experience on the Damascus road.¹⁷

According to this view Paul was alienated from God and had taken it upon himself to persecute Christians (Acts 9:2). Through his encounter with Christ he received peace and was reconciled with God and with the Christian community. He then writes out of his own experience of reconciliation with Christ. Paul might have adopted the concept of reconciliation from somewhere but he interpreted his own experience of reconciliation with Christ and the Church. He understands himself as one who was an enemy of both God and the Church. His experience is that, after reconciling with God through Christ, the Church was able to receive him. This is a clear indication of reconciliation being effected between both man and God (Acts 9:28).¹⁸

The views of the above theologians might differ concerning the origin of the Pauline theology of reconciliation, but they agree that the term implies agreement after estrangement, with the apparent theological premise that sin has separated humanity from God and that God took the initiative to restore the broken relationship with humanity. Christ became the second Adam (Rom. 5:12-15), who came to restore the perfect relationship that existed in Eden before the first Adam disobeyed God (Gen. 1:26-29).

2. The Originator and Recipients of Reconciliation

Paul’s Damascus road experience that led to his reconciliation with both God and the Church challenges Christians to acknowledge that reconciliation has to take place between God and humans as well as among human beings. Paul uses two Greek terms “*καταλλαγε*” and “*καταλλασω*” (1 Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22) to refer to the absolute reconciliation between God and human kind as well as between persons. Human beings having been alienated from God by sin, but God the merciful Creator has provided the means of reconciliation in Christ. This puts God as the subject and human kind as the object or recipient of reconciliation.¹⁹

The “*καταλλαγε*” created by God is thus a completed act that precedes all human actions.²⁰ Therefore, before reconciliation can take place between human beings, there has to be God’s intervention. The scholar above suggests that reconciliation begins when a person accepts the gift of grace that is in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Breytenbach puts it aptly that, “any concept

¹⁷ Seyoon Kim, “2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation” in *Novum Testament, An International Quarterly for the New Testament and Related Studies*, (March 1997), 38.

¹⁸ Kim, “2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation,” 44.

¹⁹ Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 168.

²⁰ Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, 169.

of reconciliation that does not take seriously the death of Christ as the event by which God changes his sinful enemy into his justified child, denounces its own apostolic origin".²¹

This notion not only recognises God as the author of reconciliation, but also introduces a very strong Christology, in the sense that true reconciliation can only come through Christ.²² Furthermore, God is not revealed anywhere else but in Christ. Reading from 2 Corinthians 5:18 we see that God himself is the author or initiator of reconciliation, reconciling humankind to Himself. This is the theological novelty in comparison with non-Christian religious thought, which knows the deity only as an object of the reconciliation of human beings, implying that it is by their works that human beings qualify for God's reconciliation. The biblical concept of reconciliation of person to person and God to humankind is entirely based on the need to be right with God. Therefore when people are made right with God, they realise their need to be reconciled with each other. In simple terms, it is in being reconciled with God that our eyes are opened to the need to be reconciled with other people. This puts an emphasis on God as the originator and humankind as the receiver of reconciliation.

Romans 5:10 says that it is while Christians were enemies of God that they were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. The state of being "enemies" not only expresses humanity's hostile attitude to God but also signifies that until a change of attitude takes place, humans are under condemnation, exposed to God's wrath. By surrendering their lives to Christ Jesus they receive a reconciliation they did not even deserve. God Himself has initiated reconciliation and his invitation is always open for all to respond by accepting His reconciliation initiative in Christ Jesus.

3. Four NT Principles that Relate to Reconciliation

In this section I will be discussing four principles or church practices that relate to reconciliation and further argue the importance of such practices for the BUSA and the BCSA as Christians. These are confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration/reparation. These principles are said to be conditions of reconciliation.²³ For people of faith, the experience of confession and forgiveness, justice and peace, and repentance are what reconciliation is all about.²⁴ The experience of the TRC illustrates the importance of the four reconciliation principles. The TRC proceedings were not necessarily led and

²¹ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 16.

²² H. Russel Botman, "The Church Partitioned or the Church Reconciled? South Africa's Theological and Historical Dilemma" in William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, eds. *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa: A Multicultural Dialogue in Comparative Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 112.

²³ Jonathan Smit, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Tentative Religious and Theological Perspectives", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (April 1995), 5.

²⁴ Botman, "The Church Partitioned or the Church Reconciled?", 107.

guided by Biblical principles but these four principles were incorporated into the truth and reconciliation process. It was necessary for the perpetrator to come forward by applying to the TRC for amnesty.²⁵ In some cases where perpetrators did not come forward to confess and the TRC viewed their presence as necessary, the TRC would summon perpetrators to appear. The perpetrator would be given a chance to confess all his/her actions in the presence of the victims, their families or representatives.²⁶ It was important for the perpetrator to confess in detail how he had committed violations of human rights prior to receiving amnesty.

In cases where a person was killed and their bodies were not already found, the perpetrator would have to disclose where the bodies were hidden. The information had to satisfy the TRC commission and victims or their families. The perpetrators were not only supposed to narrate the events but would also have to show remorse for their actions and to request forgiveness from the TRC, the victims and the country. The victims or their families were given an opportunity to forgive the perpetrators. In some cases the victims did express a need to forgive and were reconciled with perpetrators, and in some cases the victims or their families were not ready to forgive and they were given some time to process the information until they were ready to forgive. Finally, the TRC made recommendations how the previously white government, companies, groups, communities and individuals that benefited from apartheid could play a part in the reparation process to help restore the dignity of the victims. Some of reparation measures involved policies such as Affirmative Action (AA), Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and reparations and financial incentives that served as tokens to the victims or their families.

3.1 Confession

The New Testament uses two main Greek words in referring to confession, “*ομολογεω*” and “*εξολογεω*”. The term “*ομολογεω*” is found 26 times while “*εξολογεω*” is found only 10 times. The noun “*ομολογεα*”, found 6 times, is confined to Christian confession (2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Tim. 6:12), and is used with fixed liturgical connotations.²⁷ The term “*ομολογεω*” is used occasionally to denote a confession of sin, but more often it is employed to acknowledge, admit, or declare that something is so. In her definition of confession, Gallagher puts an emphasis on both admission of guilt and testimony as descriptive historical accounts that involves acts of memory and disclosure as well as confession of faith in Christ, which brings a change in the

²⁵ Mark Sanders, “Truth, Telling, Questioning: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull*, and Literature After Apartheid”. *Transformation*, Vol. 42, (June 2000), 75.

²⁶ Pieter Meiring, “Truth and Reconciliation: The South African Experience”, in William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, eds., *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa: A Multicultural Dialogue in Comparative Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 196.

²⁷ Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 156.

lifestyle of the sinner.²⁸ In Gallagher's definition one notes the importance of public confession. Confession is not only to admit guilt but also allows Christ to remove us from wrongdoing (1 John 1:9).

3.2 Repentance

To "repent" in contemporary English means either (1) to express regret (a thought, attitude, or act) or, (2) much more frequently, to regret and change from one attitude or allegiance to another.²⁹ To get an accurate idea of the precise meaning of this important word in the New Testament, it is necessary to consider the original Greek terms used.

In the New Testament, the Greek words "μετανοια" and "μετανοιω" are used to refer to repentance.³⁰ Usually the above terms express repentance in the full sense of a complete change of one's way of life (although the sense of regret is operative in Luke. 17:3.), the spiritual change implied in a sinner's return to God.³¹ Thus "μετανοιω" is used as an equivalent to the Hebrew נָשָׁב, "turn," in the Old Testament. It is employed in this sense by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38). The idea of repentance expressed by this word is intimately associated with spiritual transformation and Christian life. It is associated with processes in which human agency is prominent, such as conversion (Acts 3:19) and faith (20:21), and also with those experiences and blessings of which God alone is the author, such as remission and forgiveness of sin (Luke. 24:47; Acts 5:31).

In secular Greek the terms "μετανοια" and "μετανοιω" originally referred to knowledge acquired later, then to the change of mind to which such knowledge could lead.³² Since a change of mind implies recognition that the previous opinion was wrong, the terms acquired a sense of regret or remorse. Thus the terms came to have an emotional as well as an intellectual sense. The fact is that repentance is about *change*, and this change involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this change. When the prodigal son realised his wrongs, he left his wrong ways, went to his father and repented, even considering himself less than a servant (Luke 15: 11-31).

²⁸ Susan V. Gallagher. *Truth and Reconciliation: The Confessional Mode in South African Literature*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 4.

²⁹ Angus Stevenson and Maurice Waite, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

³⁰ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromley, trans. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 10. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 882.

³¹ William D. Chamberlain. *The Meaning of Repentance*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 25.

³² Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 156.

3.3 Forgiveness

Forgiveness generally refers to a specific act of pardoning. Someone repents and someone forgives. "Repentance" and "forgiveness" are taken as two sides of a process in which the perpetrator of an evil act "confesses" his or her remorse and the victim of that act grants pardon. One authority states that Jesus is the 'discoverer' of forgiveness and true forgiveness is found in Him and through Him.³³ According to traditional Christian teachings, the forgiveness of others is amongst the spiritual duties of the Christian believer. God is generally considered to be the original source of all forgiveness, which is made possible through the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, and is freely available to the repentant believer. Forgiveness includes taking of no account of the sin that has been committed (Mark 2:5; John 8:11), acceptance of the sinner (Luke 15 20), deliverance from the dominion of the evil powers, and delivery into the kingdom of Christ.

3.4 Restoration and Restitution

It is not possible to talk about restoration without restitution. These two concepts or terms are used in both the New and the Old Testaments with a similar meaning. The difference is that restoration is used mostly when referring to "re-union" between God and His people. In this restoration God is the initiator, restoring his people in the sense of mending his relationship with them - bearing in mind that this state of brokenness was created due to the disobedience of human kind. Moreover the brokenness often resulted in drought and suffering for the people. When the Lord restored them, drought and suffering are replaced by prosperity and blessings (Joel 2:25). Confession of sins and repentance are means by which the sinner reaches out to God for forgiveness.³⁴ The restoration as a favour of God is received in return, restoration in the sense that the broken relationship between God and human kind is mended and put behind them.

Different from restoration, restitution is not applicable when referring to reconciliation between God and humankind. We are thus not bound to make sacrifices to God for the pain that our sins cause Him. We cannot not pay or give Him restitution, because he does not suffer damage on account of our sins.³⁵ Restitution is mostly used in referring to the process of paying back by the offender for their offence to the victim. In Numbers 5:6-7 we have an example of this restitution:

When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged (NIV).

³³ Karl Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Ralph Manheim, (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1962), 35.

³⁴ Gentz, *Dictionary of the Bible and Religion*, 169.

³⁵ Kim, "2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation", 28.

Even though there is mention of unfaithfulness to the Lord in this scripture the payment is done to the victim and not to the Lord. It is true that restitution cannot remove the pain caused, but it does find ways of repairing, healing and rehabilitating the victims. Villa-Vicencio argues for a true restorative justice process where the dignity, reintegration and reparation of victims are prioritized.³⁶ The main purpose of restoration, restitution or reparation should aim at uplifting the lives of victims, and removing all the imbalances that were caused by perpetrators or their system.

In his argument regarding no easy reconciliation, Roldanus says that true repentance requires a form of satisfaction to both God and humanity.³⁷ This repentance should in many ways bring compensation to God and fellow human beings. Reconciliation is restitution portrayed within the framework of a theological understanding of salvation. Louw equates restitution to justice, when restitution is done, and then justice is being completed towards the victims.³⁸ Louw's comment is very interesting:

Justice/restitution versus reconciliation is theologically speaking a false contrast and opposition. Justice is the doing part of reconciliation, while reconciliation is the ground motivation for doing justice.³⁹

In the light of this argument I would suggest that reconciliation without restitution is meaningless. The suggestion for a need for reconciliation means that there has been misunderstanding, abuse or imbalances. A reconciliation that does not seek to rectify the above through restoration, reparation and restitution is a false reconciliation.

The Reconciliation Process of the BUSA and BCSA

After the induction of the first South African democratic government, one of its major assignments was to provide a stage to heal the past and to create a reconciliation platform for both victims and perpetrators. The TRC became a possible vehicle to facilitate reconciliation in the troubled South Africa. South Africans, including individuals, groups, political parties, business companies, religious groups, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) responded to the TRC and came forward to initiate confession and reconciliation. The BUSA and the BCSA responded to the call by the TRC and had their respective general secretaries, Rev. T. Rae for the BUSA and Rev. D. Hoffmeister for the BCSA, make public confessions on behalf of their organizations.⁴⁰ Both leaders

³⁶ Charles Villa-Vicencio and Erick Doxtader, ed., *To Repair the Irreparable: Reparation and Construction in South Africa*. (Claremont: David Philip, 2004), 64.

³⁷ Johannes Roldanus, "Theology of Reconciliation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 92 (Sept 1995): 26.

³⁸ Daniel J. Louw, "Wisdom as a New Paradigm for Practical Theology in a Post Apartheid Society," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 90 (March 1995): 52.

³⁹ Louw, "Wisdom as a New Paradigm for Practical Theology ...," 53.

⁴⁰ Confession submission to the TRC by Rev. D. Hoffmeister in 1997 (http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/bcsa_sub.htm).

repented on behalf of their organisations and expressed willingness and commitment to reconcile with each other. The submissions were followed by various reconciliation and unity meetings facilitated by the National leaders of the two churches. The national consultations and reconciliations had their own strengths and weaknesses that I discuss at length in my Master's Dissertation.⁴¹ The reconciliation process was encouraged at the regional and local church level. Regional experiences were different, depending on their past experiences. In some regions most of the churches joined the Union and there were very few members of the Convention, like in the Eastern Cape. In some regions like Gauteng, the majority of the churches remained with the Convention. Each region had a plan of dealing with the reconciliation process.

The Impact of the Merger Talks and Separation of the 1980s in the Grass Roots of the Eastern Cape

In the Eastern Cape 70% of churches joined the Union. This makes the Union stronger than the Convention in terms of numbers. The majority of the local church members were not aware of the details. Furthermore the friction was felt differently from area to area. In areas like East London, Queenstown and former Transkei, all churches automatically joined the Union. These are the areas where confrontation was not felt at the grassroots level between BUSA and BCSA. Pastors and their families as well as a few church leaders felt the results of the confrontation. In most of the churches in East London, pastors went to register themselves as well as their churches with the Union. Members were only aware after a long time that they were not with the Convention, but with the Union. This did not bother them much as they still did not understand why some were Convention while others were Union and what the difference was. Another reason is that the pastors' privileges such as salaries, pension funds, etc. were supported by the Union. All the ministers and churches standing with the Convention lost those privileges. In some cases the church members just supported their pastors due to the view that pastors know better and can better decide what is right for the church.

In some areas like Alice and Middledrift, in villages such as Njwaxa, Ngcamngeni Qanda etc, there were major conflicts between BUSA and BCSA members. Some family members joined the Union while others remained with the Convention. This caused major conflicts in the families as well the community. In Njwaxa Baptist Church, there were two groups in one building - the left side of the building was for the Union and the right side for the Convention. During the offering, each group used its own plate. The issue was

Confession submission by Rev. T. Rae in Cape Town in 1997
(http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/bap_sub.htm).

⁴¹ Luvuyo Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process Between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union of South Africa," an M.Th. Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 2007.

that both groups were claiming the building as theirs. These conflicts went to the extent of involving community leaders as well as the police for resolution. The involvement of community leaders made things worse as they did not understand what was going on but just took sides and the less popular group was requested to dissolve and were not allowed in that village.

In some areas like Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth, some members joined the Union, others the Convention. In cases where the majority of members joined the Convention and took over the building, the Union would immediately build another building for the few members who joined them.

The Eastern Cape Province Reconciliation Initiatives

The churches in the Eastern Cape Province initiated reconciliation and unity meetings that started in 1996 and ended in 2003. The group involved in the reconciliation initiatives was called Concerned Baptists (CB). Some of the meetings were for the provincial executive committees, some were spiritual services opened for all members and some were retreat and meetings for pastors and spouses. In addition, the CB facilitated pulpit exchange programs where a Convention pastor would preach at a Union Church and visa versa.

The Provincial presidents, Rev. Madolo from the Convention and Rev. Dyasi from the Union were requested to lead the process. Members attended as individuals, not as churches. The initiative was not compulsory. As a result some Union and Convention members took part and some opted not to do so. Some people took part at the beginning and later withdrew while some did not participate at first and later joined. Almost a quarter of informants responded that even though the CB initiatives ended, they were still looking forward to its good spirit and have further benefited from it, including some who spoke or fellowshiped with their brother and sisters for the first time since the 1980's split. Others said that they took the opportunity to confess and forgive each other during the CB process.

The majority of informants responded that the CB initiatives were a failure, complaining that the main aim was not clearly explained, that they were not sure if the intention was reconciliation and unity or just reconciliation, or to create a new Eastern Cape Baptist church. It appeared that there were three groups; those who supported reconciliation, those who expected the BUSA members to come back to the Convention, and those who expected that a new Eastern Cape Baptist denomination would be started. The leaders said some people found the aims and objectives were not clearly spelled out was because they themselves did not have all the answers but were following the lead of the Holy Spirit and were open to any direction that the Lord would lead them towards. Some of the members expressed concerns that the reconciliation meetings excluded White Baptists in the Eastern Cape.

The ethnographic work I conducted suggests that young people under 30 years of age of both the BUSA and the BCSA do not harbor any resentment

towards each other or anyone in relation to the Baptist conflict of the 1980s. For instance when some youth members of the Union in East London study or work in Port Elizabeth, they join a Convention church and visa versa. The youth are not really concerned about whether a person is Union or Convention. This was contrary to the older generation who were still arguing about who broke away from whom for what reason, who was right and who was wrong, etc. The findings suggest that there is still a lot of resentment amongst the older generation of both the BUSA and the BCSA. Some of the members openly said that they had not forgiven their brothers and sisters. Most members said that the reconciliation process took place and achieved nothing and each group now has moved on to do 'Gods work'. There was an emphasis on doing 'Gods work' and not focusing on petty issues.

Convention and Union and the Four Principles of Reconciliation

In reference to the four principles of reconciliation discussed in this paper, the CB fellowships did not sit down to strategise about how the two bodies would achieve the four principles of reconciliation. The CB facilitated and encouraged forgiveness through discussions, spiritual services and meetings that were centered on repentance, confession and forgiveness. At the Provincial level there was no discussion about reparations, apart from the encouragement that churches should share resources with each other.

In one of the spiritual services Rev. D. Madolo preached on 1 Corinthians 13, talking about love. He encouraged each member to consider how God loved humankind and sacrificed his only son. He said that if members truly loved God and each other, then they should sacrifice pride, historical facts and all other reasons that hinder them from reconciled with others. Members were further encouraged to repent and confess their sins to each other. In some services people were encouraged to act during the service and go to their brothers and sisters and forgive them and also ask for forgiveness. During the service members moved around and went to other members to forgive and pray with them.⁴² Reconciliation, just like repentance, is a personal commitment. As much as the TRC, the regional, and the national leadership of the BUSA and BCSA can encourage their members to reconcile, they cannot force them. That seems to be the case with the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape region. During the spiritual services there was an emphasis on the need to repent, confess, and forgive each other. During the spiritual services responsibilities were shared between BUSA and BCSA members. For instance, in one service the leader would be a Union member and the preacher was a Convention pastor and visa versa.

⁴² Ntombana, "*An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .*", 98.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the Biblical concept of reconciliation and its four principles were discussed and considered as main teachings of the Christian church. Reconciliation is a compulsory principle for all those who call themselves Christian. It is one of the highest practices in the Christian faith and equivalent to justification. It is through being reconciled with God through Jesus Christ that one becomes a Christian. In this sense reconciliation is a foundation for Christian faith. When someone becomes a Christian, they are called and expected to be reconciled with others. The Convention and the Union, who regard themselves as born again and Evangelical Christians, are expected to live by their faith, but it has not been so for some in the Eastern Cape. It appears that the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape responded to the challenge by the TRC and the national executives of both churches and coordinated reconciliation initiatives. The initiatives had some success and a number of people celebrated its work, but the majority of older people saw it as a waste of resources and time. Some of these older people complained that the main purposes of the activities were not well discussed by involved parties and that this created mistrust among members. As a result some withdrew from the process. Some said others had their own agendas to fulfill while others said that some of the Union pastors were too scared to move away and lose their privileges from the white people. In essence, based on these responses, one can conclude that there was a time that reconciliation between the two groups was a priority but now that is no longer the case. The majority of members from the two groups are still not reconciled and still hold resentment towards each other. The only way they are dealing with it is to avoid it and concentrate more on what they call "the work of God", which includes evangelism among the "lost", the un-churched. Some Convention and Union members preferred to concentrate on reaching out to others and in the process they turned a blind eye to reconciliation, a core concept that defines Christian existence. For without reconciliation there would be no Christianity, because it is upon being reconciled with Christ that human beings become Christians.⁴³

The contention in this paper is that the unreconciled members of the Eastern Cape must reconsider their faith and commitment to Christ by seeking reconciliation with each other in order to be a living witness to others. The Bible does not propose reconciliation as an option but as a mandate to those who are believers. It is time for each individual to be humble and approach their counterparts for reconciliation. Christians are products of the humility of Christ that made reconciliation possible. There can be no reconciliation without humility. It is when one realises their sinful nature and their need for humility that they are worthy of God's reconciliation. The key to reconciliation between humans and God as well as among human beings lies in humility.

⁴³ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shift in Soteriology", 16.

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