

Ghana's reconciliation process through the eyes of Pauline reconciliation

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Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

**GHANA'S RECONCILIATION PROCESS THROUGH THE EYES OF PAULINE
RECONCILIATION**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the S.T.L. Degree
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To
Late Kwasi Mawuega Setsoafia
(My Father)
and
Mrs Margaret Akosua Setsoafia
(My Mother)

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INTRODUCTION

“As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.” Nelson Mandela

Ghana is no exception to the number of countries which since the late 1960s have suffered violence through civil wars, *coups d'état* or attempted coups with their concomitant extensive human rights abuses. The picture of Ghana as a relatively peaceful country compared to the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria, which are all in the West Africa region, is partial as it conceals “many terrible episodes of ethnic and political violence and hostility and gross human rights violations.”¹ Such abuses are fueled by the presence of unconstitutional governments gaining power through military coups. This does not take away from the fact that human rights abuses have occurred in times of constitutional rule as well.

The issue of violation of human rights has become a pressing issue over the years. Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission (NRC)² was formed on January 11, 2002, eight years after Ghana's return to constitutional rule. The NRC's aim is to bring to the fore the structures that promoted abuses of human rights and make recommendations to prevent any further such occurrences. In this study, I wish to bring to the work of the NRC the relevance of the New Testament's understanding of reconciliation and its dynamics. The New Testament's understanding of reconciliation seemed to greatly assist the victims coming forward to narrate their ordeals as well as the consequent process of carving a way forward leading to the healing of wounds.

¹ Ken Agyemang Attafua, "An Overview of Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission and its

² This abbreviation appears again in Ghana's political development where it refers the National Redemption Council.

I was a toddler when the last military coup took place on December 31, 1981. Growing up, I heard stories recounting these events. As an undergraduate student at the University of Ghana (1999-2003), I watched the proceedings of the NRC broadcast live on national television and was greatly touched when in one instance, a perpetrator named B. T. Baba apologized and the victim walked up to and embraced him to rapturous applause by all who were present at the hearing. I also remember how victims as well as some in the audience, shed tears as these ordeals were recounted. I wish to contribute to the ongoing theological conversation about reconciliation as a way of continuing to bring people in my nation together. This challenging work of forgiveness and coming together is essential for building a people with a common mission. Specifically, given the goals of the NRC in its work of listening to victims of human rights abuses and offering advice, I will claim that the New Testament provides the theological background from which to understand the work and goals of this Commission.

As an introduction to this work, I will begin by defining and clarifying the notion of reconciliation and how it applies to the context of Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission. This is important so as to mark a starting point in this project's road map.

The term reconciliation, when seen at a national level, has particular relevance for countries in the aftermath of internal conflicts. In fact, after the Cold War, except for the Gulf War, there have been very few interstate conflicts.³ Rather the world has seen more conflicts at the intrastate level such as civil wars, massacres, military dictatorships and genocides.

Worth mentioning in this connection are the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of about 800,000 people in Rwanda⁴ and the situation that developed in the Darfur region of Sudan

³ Some examples, the India-Pakistan war in 1999, Eritrean-Ethiopia war in 2000 and the Sudan-South Sudan war in 2012.

⁴ A Des Forges *et al*, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), accessed on January 27, 2016, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/>.

where armed attacks on civilians by the Janjaweed have caused the displacement of over 1.65 million people with over 200,000 deaths.⁵

While at its core reconciliation entails the attempt to mend and renew broken relationships, and also making efforts to overcome enmity by transforming the parties involved, it is a polyvalent term.⁶ This is because it has been studied in the last thirty years from different perspectives and disciplines including psychology, law, politics, the social sciences and theology.⁷

Robert Schreiter takes a look at the way ordinary human societies perceive reconciliation. According to Schreiter, human societies do not have an agreed upon definition of reconciliation.⁸ This has not been possible because specific circumstances such as what needs to be overcome and undone, who needs to be involved, what will count for truth and justice in the new situation and what the process is aiming at, all count in determining the meaning of reconciliation itself.⁹

In some cultures, there is a unique way of dealing with situations where reconciliation is called for and this is expressed ritually:

...an accusation of wrongdoing is leveled at someone, that person acknowledges wrongdoing and apologizes in some formal way, the apology is accepted by the community, and the wrongdoer is ritually reintegrated into the community, signifying forgiveness. Sometimes a probationary period marked by ritual punishment (such as a fine or a continuing partial exclusion from the community)

⁵ Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary-General, January (Geneva: United Nation, 2005), 3, accessed on January 27, 2016, http://www.un.org/news/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf.

⁶ O. Ernesto Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation: Jon Sobrino's Christological Spirituality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 10.

⁷ Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 10.

⁸ Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 13.

⁹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 13.

precedes full reintegration. This pattern is reenacted in myriad variations throughout the world.¹⁰

Schreiter however concedes that:

Reconciliation is an intensely sought but elusive goal. Part of the difficulty is the sheer enormity of the task, so great that it seems well-nigh unachievable. For it is not only a matter of healing memories and receiving forgiveness, it is also about changing the structures in society that provoked, promoted and sustained violence. Reconciliation is also elusive because people sometimes seek the wrong things from the wrong people at the wrong time. When should repentance be required or forgiveness sought? Can a reconciliation program be put into place? How and when should the perpetrator of violence and the victim be brought together? Our impatience at getting beyond the sometimes-unbearable burdens of the past may actually impede any possible reconciliation process as much as support.¹¹

According to Valiente, “the multiple efforts to confront the challenges posed by the pursuit of reconciliation have led to rapid growth and evolution in this area of study and have yielded many, often contradictory, approaches to reconciliation.”¹² Also on this note of contradiction, Schreiter first describes what reconciliation is not (false reconciliation). He outlines three forms of false reconciliation. The first form of false reconciliation is that of reconciliation as a hasty peace. This form “tries to deal with a history of violence by suppressing its memory.”¹³ It calls for a fresh beginning and is usually initiated by the very perpetrators who, upon either seeing the consequences or potential consequences of their actions, are eager to move on to a new situation.¹⁴ In effect “to trivialize and ignore memory is to trivialize and ignore human identity, and to trivialize and ignore human identity is to trivialize and ignore human

¹⁰ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 13.

¹¹ Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 1-2.

¹² Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 10.

¹³ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 18.

¹⁴ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 19.

dignity.”¹⁵ This false reconciliation of hasty peace ends up being the opposite of reconciliation because, by turning a blind eye on suffering it leads to the victim being forgotten; in addition, because the causes of these sufferings are never exposed, they are never dealt with.¹⁶ As a number of examples in Latin America attest to, it is unfortunate that sometimes church leaders find themselves among those who call for this kind of false reconciliation thinking mistakenly that they are in line with Christian teaching when they foster reconciliation without addressing the causes of conflict. These church leaders are rather ignorant of what reconciliation entails.¹⁷

Genuine reconciliation takes its origin from those who have been hurt. The reason for this is that it is impossible for those who have hurt others to forgive themselves. We must also not confuse reconciliation and repentance as “repentance can originate from the side of those who have perpetrated violence, but reconciliation and forgiveness must come from the side of those who have suffered violence.”¹⁸ The fear that remembering the violence of the past can lead to a resurgence of hostility often drives this reconciliation of hasty peace but one must also realize that “suppressing the memory does not take the violence away; it only postpones its expurgation.”¹⁹

The second form of false reconciliation is what Schreiter calls “reconciliation instead of liberation.” This is false reconciliation because liberation is not a substitute for reconciliation; liberation is rather a prerequisite for reconciliation.²⁰ Thus “to choose reconciliation as an alternative to liberation does not acknowledge the deeply conflictive realities that create the

¹⁵ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 19.

¹⁶ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 19.

¹⁷ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 20.

¹⁸ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 21.

¹⁹ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 21. Actually reconciliation also requires the participation both: victims (survivors) and oppressors. Reconciliation and forgiveness cannot do without the one who has been hurt.

²⁰ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 22.

chasms that reconciliation hopes to bridge.”²¹ Conflict is not periphery to the process of reconciliation. It is in fact at the very heart of it.²² How do we handle this conflict then that elicits the need for reconciliation?

The third form of false reconciliation is “reconciliation as a managed process.” This managed process is what Schreiter refers to as conflict mediation, “a process whose goal is to lessen conflict or to get the parties to accept and live with the conflictual situation.”²³

Reconciliation in this case is understood as a bargaining process in which conflicting sides give up some of their interests in favor of seeing an end to the conflict.²⁴ This false reconciliation “reduces reconciliation to a technical rationality; it becomes a skill that can be taught to deal with a problem that can be managed.”²⁵ As we will see, reconciliation is more an attitude than an acquired skill; it is a stance assumed in the face of a broken world and not a tool to repair the world.²⁶ It is “more a spirituality than a strategy.”²⁷

Even though reconciliation has been a central theme of the Christian faith from the time of the apostles, its Christian meaning has broadened over time.²⁸ There are different emphases in the Christian understanding of reconciliation. Protestants understand reconciliation by placing an emphasis on Christ’s atoning death and justification by faith.²⁹ A classic source for this theology of reconciliation in Scripture is Romans 5:6-11.³⁰ The Catholic viewpoint is slightly different as

²¹ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 21.

²² Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 23.

²³ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 25.

²⁴ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 25.

²⁵ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 25.

²⁶ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 26.

²⁷ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 26.

²⁸ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 13.

²⁹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 14.

³⁰ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved

the emphasis is on “the love of God poured out upon us as a result of the reconciliation God has effected in Christ. Here the emphasis is on the new creation.”³¹ A classic source of this theology is Second Corinthians 5:17-19.³²

In his later work, Schreiter offers a brief overview of the main points that make up the current Catholic Christian understanding of reconciliation. These central points, five in number, can be briefly summarized as follows:

- God is the initiator and ultimate agent of reconciliation, who begins his reconciling work through the victims;
- God’s reconciliation is mediated through human beings whose actions respond to God’s grace;
- The experience of reconciliation transforms both the victim and the victimizer into a new creation;
- Christ’s life is the “master narrative” of divine reconciliation, and his passion, death and resurrection reveal the process of reconciliation that creates a new humanity;
- The process of reconciliation will only find its fulfillment with the consummation of the world in Christ.³³

For Schreiter, Christ’s life and message illuminate a new way of being in a violent world and thus mediate a spirituality of reconciliation that responds to God’s action in history. In the

by his life.¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

³¹ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 14.

³² ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

³³ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 14-19.

ultimate analysis, however, the process of reconciliation enables a broken humanity to experience God's love.³⁴

To elaborate further, John W. De Gruchy advances the view that, theology must be clear and proper about its stands on reconciliation in order to avoid confusing our theological and political categories.³⁵ It is true that Christians are expected to proclaim their faith convictions and the promises and hopes revealed therein—for instance that through Christ God has reconciled the world to Godself, or that God's Kingdom is in our midst.³⁶

But as de Gruchy notes, although these claims are appropriate from a theological vantage point, when they are expressed in a political discourse or equated with a particular political policy or reality, confessions like these often yield confusion, disappointment, and abuse.³⁷ These eschatological assertions still need to be fulfilled in historical terms, but at the same time, they are difficult to fully verify in empirical reality. While Christians need to differentiate between their theological and political expressions, it is important to remember that the realities to which they refer are deeply interrelated.³⁸

Reconciliation can be thought of as being comprised of four distinct but overlapping levels of reality each of which has a goal of overcoming enmity and alienation existing in relationships:

- The theological level, referring to the reconciliation between God and humanity and the impact that such reconciliation between God and humanity and the impact that such reconciliation has on human relations;

³⁴ Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation*, 15.

³⁵ John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 17-18.

³⁶ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 18.

³⁷ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 18.

³⁸ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 18.

- The interpersonal level comprising the relationships between individuals;
- The social level, pertaining to the restoration of relations between ethnic, racial, and other social groups within a community; and
- The political level, which refers to state or national projects or reconciliation.³⁹

There are two ways in which Christianity perceives reconciliation. Reconciliation exists both as a continuous process and a final end, which are very much interrelated. Reconciliation understood as a process seeks to anticipate in an imperfect way, the kingdom of God (the final and eschatological end.), where humanity will be united (reconciled) to God. How do these two ways of seeing reconciliation affect our discussion? Valiente explains:

.... though Christianity maintains that a full, harmonious, and just restoration of relationships among human beings and with God is an eschatological reality, one that will only be completed at the end of history, it also insists that human efforts that seek even partial and limited reconciliations are signs that anticipate this full restoration, ground the hope for the future, and are absolutely necessary to halt conflicts that generate widespread suffering and death.⁴⁰

Violation of rights such as summary trials and executions, abductions and murders, tortures, detentions without trials, confiscation of properties, unfair dismissals from jobs and political harassment cannot be overlooked. If victims are asked to be silent about their sufferings, “the would-be reconcilers are in fact continuing the oppressive situation by saying in effect that the experiences of those who suffered are not important and therefore they themselves are

³⁹ De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 26.

⁴⁰ Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 4.

unimportant to the process.”⁴¹ Listening to the victims exposes the structures that enabled these violations to take place and thus helps to take measures to prevent any further occurrences.

Before bringing this introduction to a close, I wish to briefly throw some light on two salient terms that have come up time and again in the discussion: forgiveness and reconciliation. These two terms seem synonymous but in fact are not the same in meaning. Forgiveness “is what happens when the victim of some hurtful action freely chooses to release the perpetrator of that action from the bondage of guilt, gives up his or her own feelings of ill will, and surrenders any attempt to hurt or damage the perpetrator in return, thus clearing the way for reconciliation and restoration of relationship.”⁴² At the interpersonal and social level, the capacity to forgive is a gift to both victims and perpetrators. It liberates the former from their desire for retaliation and the latter from guilt. Moreover, forgiveness implicitly acknowledges blame, calls for the elimination of injustice and its causes, and opens the doors for the possibility of reconciliation.

Only forgiveness has the power to release victims from the chains of their fear, negative feelings and pain. Forgiveness is the result of a process that begins with a desire to bring healing to a ruptured relationship.⁴³ What is being aimed at in the end is reconciliation but sometimes reconciliation proves to be elusive. For instance, in situations where the perpetrator is unrepentant or has died or cannot be located and is therefore absent, reconciliation is not possible because reconciliation “can occur only where both parties accept each other and commit themselves to a new relationship.”⁴⁴ In other words, reconciliation is possible only when both parties cooperate and for this reason, when faced with situations like the instances mentioned

⁴¹ Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 19.

⁴² Christopher D. Marshall, *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime, and Punishment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 264.

⁴³ Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 268.

⁴⁴ Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 269.

above, the victim is only able to forgive unilaterally.⁴⁵ Reconciliation however, has not been achieved “but where the potential for reconciliation does exist, forgiveness is the means to that end; it is a way of ‘regaining a brother or sister’ (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15) from their previous *persona* of offender or abuser or enemy.”⁴⁶

This thesis proceeds as follows: chapter one looks at the Republic of Ghana’s history and political development leading up to the time of the fourth republic after independence. It will throw light on the NRC, its birth, and its proceedings. The commission was the avenue for victims to come forward and tell their story to the whole nation. Chapter two sets forth an exegesis of two passages in the New Testament (from 2 Corinthians and Ephesians). For a country whose population is more that seventy percent Christian (by the 2010 estimate, Ghana is 71.2% Christian, 17.6% Muslim, 5.2% Traditional, 5.2% None and 0.8% Other), I want to use the sacred writings of the New Testament as a theological foundation for the faith of the witnesses that allowed them to forgive. Chapter three will then bring the New Testament vision to bear on the situation and context of the Republic of Ghana. In doing so, I will investigate how the commission influenced the history of the Republic of Ghana after its sittings in the areas of national unity and stability of the nation’s government. Could more have been done to aid the process of reconciliation? I will then conclude with some personal reflections.

⁴⁵ Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 269.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Beyond Retribution*, 269.

CHAPTER 1: GHANA: HISTORY AND POLITICAL HISTORY

1. Pre-colonial Era

Ghana is located on the western coast of Africa bordered on the north by Burkina Faso, on the west by Ivory Coast, on the east by Togo and on the south by the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana was formed from a merger of the British colony of the Gold Coast and the British



Togoland Trust Territory. There is archaeological evidence to show that present-day Ghana has been inhabited for at least the past thirty-five thousand years.⁴⁷ Present-day Ghana got its name from the ancient Ghana Empire, which flourished in the eleventh century AD.⁴⁸

The location of the Ghana Empire is some five hundred miles north of present-day Accra, Ghana's capital city. The Ghana Empire included most of present-day Senegal, and some parts of Mali and Mauritania. It existed up until the thirteenth century when it collapsed. According to legend, the descendants of the Ghana Empire migrated to present-day Ghana after its collapse.⁴⁹ By the fourteenth century, they arrived in present-day Ghana for the purposes of trade. They exchanged cloth and metal wares from the Sahel, for kola nuts and gold.⁵⁰ The Akan kingdom of Bono⁵¹ and the northern Mamprusi kingdom arose in the fourteenth century and controlled this

The image of ancient Ghana on this page was taken from the following website:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/4chapter1.shtml>, accessed on February 10, 2016.

⁴⁷ History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events, accessed on February 10, 2016,
<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/timeline.php>.

⁴⁸ "Political History," accessed on February 10,
http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/republic/polit_hist.php.

⁴⁹ Mark O'Malley, "Ghana," in Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (eds), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African & African American Experience*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 783.

⁵⁰ O'Malley, "Ghana," 783.

⁵¹ This kingdom was located in the mid-belt of the country.

rich trade.⁵² Europeans arrived in the late fifteenth century of which the first were the Portuguese. Their trade in superior weaponry caught the attention of the Asante who moved their trade in gold from the Muslim north to the southern coast during the sixteenth century; this must have caused the Akan to expand their territory toward the coast.⁵³ The Bono kingdom later collapsed and was taken over by the Asante.⁵⁴

The Asante is composed of members of the Twi-speaking branch of the Akan people. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Asante, under the leadership of a series of militant chiefs, conquered and dominated other surrounding states. At the end of the seventeenth century, Osei Tutu became the Asantehene (King of Asante) and under his rule, the conquered states were joined to the Asante to make the Asante Kingdom with its capital at Kumasi.⁵⁵ Stools were traditional symbols of authority, but the Asante Golden Stool represented the united spirit of the Asante and its allied states.⁵⁶

By the middle of the eighteenth century, under the leadership of Asantehene Opoku Ware I, successor to Osei Tutu, the Asante kingdom had expanded with the conquest of the northern states of Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Gonja.⁵⁷ However, movement to the south for expansion and trade brought the Asante into contact with the antagonistic coastal Ewe, Ga-Adangbe and Fante people as well the various European merchants who had built castles and forts along the coast.⁵⁸

Of the Europeans who arrived in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese were the first to arrive in 1482. Their mission was to explore opportunities for trade in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Portuguese named their first settlement on the coast of Ghana *El-mina*, which means “the mine.”

⁵² O'Malley, “Ghana,” 783.

⁵³ O'Malley, “Ghana,” 783.

⁵⁴ Sometimes called “Ashanti.”

⁵⁵ “Pre-Colonial Period,” accessed on February 10, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/pre-colonial.php>

⁵⁶ “Pre-Colonial Period.”

⁵⁷ “Pre-Colonial Period.”

⁵⁸ “Pre-Colonial Period.”

At Elmina,⁵⁹ they built their castle, the Elmina castle, which still stands and was the first of a series of forts along the Gold Coast designed to keep other competitive Europeans and hostile Africans at bay from the profitable trade in the Gold Coast.⁶⁰

In the sixteenth century, the opening of European plantations in the New World saw the more lucrative trade in slaves overshadow the trade in gold.⁶¹ Thus, struggle arose again among European groups and among competing local kingdoms over the slave trade. The main struggle in this period was between the Portuguese and the Dutch. In 1642, the Portuguese lost the Elmina castle to the Dutch and then departed the Gold Coast for good.⁶² Struggles continued as the next one hundred and fifty years were marked by change and uncertainty.

The trade in slaves grew and reached its peak in the eighteenth century as Philip Curtin estimates that about 6.3million slaves were shipped from West Africa destined for North and South America.⁶³ Relationships between the local populations and the European slave traders were strained. Even though tropical diseases killed and continued to kill these Europeans who arrived in the Gold Coast, the lure of the profit from trade made the Gold Coast an irresistible destination.⁶⁴

2. Colonial Era

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the British gained control of the Dutch coastal forts and thus became the dominant European power in the Gold Coast. However, it took a series of wars with the Asante over a period of fifty years before the British were able take over

⁵⁹ Same as *El-mina*

⁶⁰ "Political History."

⁶¹ "Early European Contact and the Slave Trade," accessed on February 10, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/slave-trade.php>.

⁶² "Early European Contact and the Slave Trade."

⁶³ "Early European Contact and the Slave Trade."

⁶⁴ "Early European Contact and the Slave Trade."

the Asante kingdom's possessions in the south. The vast Asante Empire shrunk to the Asante and Brong-Ahafo regions of present-day Ghana.⁶⁵ The coastal Fante were also, about this time, organizing themselves and uniting under a king, with a fifteen thousand strong army, a civil service as well as a constitution but this was short lived as the British brought it to end with the arrest of its leaders.⁶⁶ In 1874, the British brought the British Crown Colony of the Gold Coast into existence by activating a colonial policy that had been in force since the signing of the bond of 1844 between themselves and the local coastal chiefs.⁶⁷ Thus began the period of formal colonization.

However, the Asante and Fante tradition of organization and education together with the desire for autonomy still existed within the colonial period.⁶⁸ The Gold Coast was touted as the showpiece of Britain's colonies by virtue of being the best educated, the richest, having the best-organized native authorities, and being the first to have an elected majority in the legislature. By 1932, Ghana had become the world's leading exporter of cocoa. The colonial powers were weakened after World War II and the British began slowly to give in to African political representation. But the desire the indigenes to be autonomous continued and culminated in a number of riots in 1948 that sparked the Gold Coast people's agitation for independence.⁶⁹ Colonialism was soon to become a thing of the past.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was prominent among the leaders of this struggle for independence. Born in 1909, Nkrumah trained as a teacher at Achimota College in Ghana before departing Ghana for the United States and Britain for further studies. He returned to the country and formed the Convention People's Party (CPP) in 1949 with the slogan, "Self-Government

⁶⁵ "Political History."

⁶⁶ "Political History."

⁶⁷ "Political History."

⁶⁸ "Political History."

⁶⁹ "Political History."

Now.” In 1950, Nkrumah called for strikes and was jailed, only to be released a year later. In 1956, the Gold Coast held an election in which Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party won seventy percent of the seats in the Legislative Assembly.

In 1957, Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from colonial rule with Nkrumah installed as Prime Minister. He later became President when Ghana became a republic in 1960 after a national referendum that same year. With an area of 238,533 square kilometers, Ghana is divided into ten administrative regions. Ghana’s population currently stands at about 26 million inhabitants.

3. Post-independence Era

Nkrumah initiated a good number of social projects with the aim of improving the quality of life for Ghanaians. On the continent of Africa, Nkrumah was spearheading the course for all of Africa to come together as one nation (that is African Unity). The government of Nkrumah flourished in its early years and completed projects like the Akosombo Dam, which gave birth to Lake Volta, the world’s largest artificial lake. Nkrumah’s vision led him to start many expensive and ambitious projects with borrowed money. Ghana’s debt rose fast and the economy began to turn bad, as the basic agricultural sector had been neglected.⁷⁰ Foreign investors were by law forced to re-invest at least sixty-percent of their profits within Ghana.⁷¹ When encountering much opposition shortly after independence, Nkrumah banned all other political parties.⁷² He then assumed increasingly autocratic powers with the establishment of the republic in 1960.⁷³ Nkrumah also suspended democracy by suspending the constitution. The people became poorer and poorer as the economy got out of control. Nkrumah’s popularity fell as he repressed popular

⁷⁰ “History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events.”

⁷¹ “History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events.”

⁷² O’Malley, “Ghana,” 789.

⁷³ O’Malley, “Ghana,” 789.

demonstrations and arrested those who opposed him.⁷⁴ Many suffered at that time from human rights abuses. Falling prices of cocoa coupled with allegations of mismanagement and the increasing debt fueled a bloodless *coup d'état* on February 24, 1966 while Nkrumah was paying an official visit to chairman Mao in Beijing, China. Nkrumah lived in exile in Guinea until his death on April 27, 1972 in Bucharest, Romania while seeking medical treatment. The crowds took all of Nkrumah's statues down in the weeks that followed the military takeover.⁷⁵

With the overthrow of Nkrumah, the National Liberation Council (NLC) led by Lieutenant General Ankrah and later by Brigadier Akwasi A. Afrifa took over power and ruled the country from 1966 until 1969. They banned Nkrumah's Convention People's Party and proceeded to imprison its leaders. They stopped Nkrumah's major development projects and investigated former officials for corruption.⁷⁶ The NLC appointed a cabinet of civil servants as a way of beginning the process of restoring the country to democracy.⁷⁷ In line with this promise, the NLC made sure the politicians who were allowed to run in the 1969 elections were proponents of Western democracy.

Dr. K. A. Busia won the 1969 elections and became Prime Minister. Busia and his government continued with the policies of the NLC. They put in place a policy that drove some foreigners especially Lebanese, Asians, and Nigerians out of the retail sector. These foreigners were perceived to be unfairly monopolizing the retail business to the disadvantage of Ghanaians.⁷⁸ Busia also suspended the payment of foreign debts incurred during the Nkrumah era. However, cocoa prices, which had been volatile right from the colonial era, fell

⁷⁴ "History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events."

⁷⁵ "History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events."

⁷⁶ O'Malley, "Ghana," 789.

⁷⁷ "National Liberation Council and Busia Years," accessed on February 10, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/1966-71.php>.

⁷⁸ "National Liberation Council and Busia Years."

dramatically.⁷⁹ Busia, upon recommendation from the International Monetary Fund, put in place austerity measures as part of structural adjustment efforts to give the country a better financial base. These austerity measures led to wage freezes, tax increases, currency devaluations and rising import prices.⁸⁰

The middle class and salaried workers suffered most from the effects of the austerity measures. The Trade Union Congress organized protests and in response Busia sent the army to occupy their headquarters. The Army troops and officers were also affected by these austerity measures as the defense budget was cut significantly.⁸¹ Lieutenant Colonel (later General) Ignatius Kutu Acheampong led a bloodless *coup d'état* on January 13, 1972 to bring the twenty-seven month old second republic to an end.

General Acheampong became the head of state and chairman of newly formed National Redemption Council (NRC). The curtain was drawn on the second republic, but its time however unearthed many issues concerning the development of the country. Questions such as the uneven distribution of resources to the regions⁸² because of favoritism, rural development versus urban development and how much government involvement in determining the cost of university education could be tolerated, were raised. There were no clear answers to these questions.⁸³

Unlike the NLC, which overthrew the first republic, the NRC had no plan to return the country to democracy. They arrested Busia and his ministers, leveling charges of corruption against them. The NRC gained popularity by reversing the austerity measures of the Busia

⁷⁹ Exports of cocoa provided much of Ghana's foreign currency earnings. Factors like competition from neighboring Ivory Coast and smuggling of crops also to Ivory Coast are responsible for the constantly fluctuating prices of cocoa.

⁸⁰ "National Liberation Council and Busia Years."

⁸¹ "National Liberation Council and Busia Years."

⁸² Ghana is divided into administrative regions for governance.

⁸³ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979," accessed on February 10, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/1972-79.php>.

government. The country's currency was re-valued upward.⁸⁴ The NRC later caused the nationalization of large foreign owned companies.⁸⁵ These measures, though immediately popular among the people, only appeared to solve the country's problems. Acheampong's popularity continued to grow as he successfully negotiated international loan agreements and rescheduled Ghana's debts, provided price support for basic food imports, while encouraging Ghanaians to be self-reliant through the agricultural sector with the Operation Feed Yourself program.⁸⁶ The Operation Feed Yourself program was a nine-day wonder. When oil prices rose during 1974 and after, the country was left short of fuel as it lacked foreign exchange and credit.⁸⁷ Poor price management and urbanization caused a decline in basic food production.

Still bent on holding onto power, the NRC reorganized itself into the supreme Military Council (SMC) in 1975 with Acheampong still as leader but they were the same "wolves in sheep's clothing." Acheampong made sure he excluded his opponents in the NRC from the SMC. The SMC issued a decree forbidding the spreading of rumors. They banned a number of independent newspapers and detained their journalists.⁸⁸ They also got the army to break up student demonstrations and repeatedly closed down the universities which had become centers for opposition gatherings.

Even though civil groups called for a return to democracy, the SMC preferred a union government. The planned union government was expected to be a mixture of elected civilians and appointed military leaders with no place at all for party politics. Some of the people were in favor of this idea, while others were against it. The SMC organized a referendum in March 1978 on the subject of the union government. The proponents of the union government won by a

⁸⁴ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁸⁵ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁸⁶ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁸⁷ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁸⁸ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

narrow margin. The opponents did not accept the result declaring it to be fraudulent and thus organized demonstrations against the government. The SMC reacted by banning several organizations and arresting as many as three hundred people among its opponents.⁸⁹ The SMC proceeded to put in measures such as a commission to see to the drawing up of a new constitution in favor of this union government.

In July 1978, a group of SMC officers⁹⁰ forced Acheampong out of office and replaced him with Lieutenant General Frederick W.K. Akuffo. These other officers acted in response to the poor economic conditions at the time. Inflation had reached three hundred percent and there were shortages of basic commodities. Cocoa production also fell.⁹¹ Akuffo promised to return the country to democracy. He discarded the idea of a union government and lifted the ban on party politics on January 1, 1979. Akuffo granted amnesty to jailed members of both Nkrumah's and Busia's governments.⁹² He also granted amnesty to those convicted of subversion during the Acheampong era.⁹³ Elections were due for July 1, 1979. However, he was unwilling to try his predecessor for human-rights abuses and corruption. He simply opted to just strip of his military titles and ranks.

The effect of the prolonged decline in living standards was unbearable among the citizenry. There were also rumors that these military rulers (SMC) were in the process of acquiring immunity from prosecution after the elections. This was no good news either and thus on the eve of the elections, a group of junior officers led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings overthrew the SMC on June 4, 1979 and went ahead to form the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC purged state offices of the corrupt appointees of its

⁸⁹ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁹⁰ These officers belonged to the same group as Acheampong but were not pleased with his leadership.

⁹¹ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁹² "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

⁹³ "The National redemption Council Years, 1972-1979."

predecessors.⁹⁴ AFRC opinion was that the leaders of the SMC had not been accountable to the people.⁹⁵ They wiped the political slate clean by a systematic execution of the leaders of the SMC. The AFRC organized the elections as planned by the SMC and then yielded power three months later to the elected government led by Dr. Hilla Limann in September 1979.

Unlike the country's previously elected presidents, Limann was not a charismatic figure; he had no personal following even within his People's National Party (PNP). He disagreed strongly with some of the members of his inner circle on national policies.⁹⁶ However, the immediate threat to Limann was the AFRC. Limann reacted to this threat by ordering Rawlings and the other members of the AFRC into immediate retirement. The Trade Union Congress said its members did not earn enough to pay for their food and other necessities as a result of the worsening economic situation.⁹⁷ The government's popularity took a nosedive when it reacted violently to protests and strikes by workers over these worsening conditions. By 1981, the situation was so bad that Ghana was close to famine and bankruptcy. Rawlings again led a group of soldiers in a *coup d'état* and overthrew Limann's government on December 31, 1981. The third republic lasted only seventeen months.

4. Some Stability Finally

As head of state, Rawlings enjoyed popularity as he dissolved parliament, banned political parties, formed the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), and appointed civilians to head government ministries.⁹⁸ Rawlings described the year before his second *coup* as a period of regression and stated that his ultimate purpose of return was to restore human

⁹⁴ Mark O'Malley, "Ghana," 789.

⁹⁵ "The Rawlings Era," accessed on February 11, 2016, http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/rawlings_era.php.

⁹⁶ "The Rawlings Era."

⁹⁷ "The Rawlings Era."

⁹⁸ O'Malley, "Ghana," 789.

dignity to Ghanaians.⁹⁹ The PNDC received opposition from some former politicians who felt the third republic had not been given enough time to prove itself. The Ghana Bar Association (GBA) also criticized the PNDC's use of people's tribunal to administer justice.¹⁰⁰ The Trade Union Congress was not pleased with being ordered to back down on their demands for wage increases and the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) called on the PNDC to hand over power.¹⁰¹ There was an attempted coup in June 1982 and those implicated were promptly executed.¹⁰² Many who disagreed with the PNDC administration left the country and went into exile.¹⁰³ Within the PNDC itself, there were some who disagreed with Rawlings on what political philosophy was required to achieve the PNDC's goals. For example, John Ndebugre who advocated a Marxist-Leninist course for the PNDC was jailed for most of the latter part of the 1980s.¹⁰⁴ According to the PNDC, Ghana's sorry economic situation was partially due to bad governance. The PNDC inherited the debts from the Nkrumah government and an inflation rate of over two hundred percent.¹⁰⁵ At the end of the PNDC's first year in office, Rawlings announced a four-year program of economic austerity as the first phase of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP).¹⁰⁶ In the next few years, significant progress was made. Inflation dropped to twenty percent and Ghana's economy grew at a rate of six percent per year.¹⁰⁷ His efforts were rewarded with new loans from the International Monetary Fund as Ghana continued to have the highest growth rate in Africa.¹⁰⁸ By 1987, after several failed coup attempts against

⁹⁹ "The Second Coming of Rawlings: The First Six Years, 1982-87," accessed on February 11, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/1982-87.php>.

¹⁰⁰ Public tribunals were established to try those who allegedly committed anti-government acts.

¹⁰¹ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰² "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰³ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰⁴ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰⁵ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰⁶ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰⁷ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹⁰⁸ "History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events."

him, Rawlings' PNDC had consolidated its control over the military.¹⁰⁹ The austerity measures provoked protests and Rawlings came under pressure from international donors to implement democratic reforms.¹¹⁰ The PNDC was also criticized by student organizations, the GBA, and opposition groups from exile who questioned its legitimacy.¹¹¹

In 1990, Rawlings formed the National Commission for Democracy to plan the road to democracy. Multiparty elections were held in 1992 and Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the presidential elections with nearly sixty percent of the votes. The opposition accused Rawlings of fraud in the elections and went ahead to boycott the parliamentary elections, which followed suit. The opposition led by its Presidential candidate, Professor Albert Adu-Boahen cried foul on the grounds of a variety of electoral malpractices. This was the first time in Ghana's turbulent history that an incumbent military ruler had participated in an election as a presidential candidate. The independent observers however declared the elections to be free and fair.¹¹² The advent of the fourth republic brought with it a period of significant growth in democratic governance. Ghanaians enjoyed many more rights and liberties. Evidence of these liberties could be seen in the work of the private media as well as institutions like the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), which played watchdog roles.

Over the next few years, Ghana's economy continued to grow to the praise of the International Monetary Fund. Democratization however brought new challenges as critics had a different view. They charged Rawlings with abandoning economic discipline as increased government spending had produced budget deficits. After his four years in constitutional power,

¹⁰⁹ O'Malley, "Ghana," 789.

¹¹⁰ O'Malley, "Ghana," 789.

¹¹¹ "The Second Coming of Rawlings."

¹¹² "History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events."

Rawlings was re-elected in 1996 with fifty-seven percent of the votes. This time around, the opposition and all observers accepted the elections to be free and fair.¹¹³ He effected economic reforms, which attracted foreign investment.¹¹⁴ The political climate also improved and about the same time (in 1997) a Ghanaian, Kofi Annan, was appointed to head the United Nations. These occurrences brought Ghana some prominence among African nations. From 1992 until the present, Ghana has been very stable politically with one civilian ruler handing over to another.

Rawlings, who was responsible for the fourth and fifth military coups, attempted to protect himself from the hands of the law, together with his administration before he left office as military ruler in 1992. He declared a self-amnesty in the constitution of the fourth republic to prevent the possibility of any legal action being taken later in the future against members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council of the fourth coup of June 4, 1979 and the Provisional National Defense Council of the fifth coup of December 31, 1981.

In 2000, Rawlings' presidency came to an end as the constitution allowed only two terms of four years per term in office, after which the incumbent is ineligible to stand for the next election. Rawlings' hand-picked successor and Vice-President during his second term in office, Professor John Evans Atta-Mills of the NDC lost to John Agyekum Kuffour of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) in the 2000 Presidential elections.

Kuffour, a lawyer by profession, immediately set in motion a government mechanism to address the nation's past human rights abuses. In January 2002, he signed the bill into law paving the way for the formation of the National Reconciliation Commission to look into the nation's past years of human rights abuses.

¹¹³ "History Timeline- Chronology of Important Events."

¹¹⁴ O'Malley, "Ghana," 790.

5. Effects of Political Instability

The involvement of the military in politics has had a negative impact on Ghana's development. The repeated military takeovers delayed the establishment of a democratic culture needed for any meaningful economic growth. However, one must ask what the root causes of these instabilities may be?

Much as Ghanaians should shoulder some blame for this instability, it is equally important to take note of what happened prior to independence: the pre-colonial and the colonial era. As mentioned earlier, the land was rich and was engaged in trading. Slave trading brought tensions between tribes and kingdoms as they struggled to control the trade. Kingdoms and tribes were already divided and unlike in Europe where nations were formed more or less along kingdom lines, no considerations were made for people or cultures at the Berlin conference in 1884-1885 when thousands of kingdoms of Africa were divided into approximately fifty European colonies, including the Gold Coast. Kingdoms and tribes belonging to the same colony were then obliged to accept each other as one people even if they were hitherto enemies. Language alone is enough to divide a people and even make it impossible for people to understand each other.

Then the Gold Coast became a British colony and was ruled by policies made by its governors. The British introduced a colonial development policy, which created an environment that did not promote economic growth after independence. The first republic inherited repressive state institutions that promoted colonial exploitation and domination. It was only after the agitations in 1948 that some Ghanaians were to have some role in ruling the country. The colonial masters did not lay down the foundations for the country to take off after independence with at least an assurance of good economic resources.

The colonial government also promoted and maintained a monocrop trading system. It promoted the commercial farming of cocoa to the detriment of developing the industrial infrastructure of the country. Thus the industrial infrastructure that would have generated employment for the masses was virtually non-existent. Ghana had to import basic commodities such as food, clothing, and other basic items.

The colonial government's policy of "indirect rule" did not help either. "Indirect rule" was a system of local government the British employed to exercise control over the Northern Territories through local chiefs. This did not help bring about the unity and integration needed to promote a democratic culture. As Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame K. Ninsin put it, "the government of the newly independent country was not only confronted with the ugly problems of widespread poverty, ignorance, disease, squalor and mounting unemployment but also a superficial sense of territorial and national community and a precarious basis of legitimacy for state institutions."¹¹⁵

As the adage goes, "you can blame a man for pushing you down, but you have yourself to blame for refusing to stand up and walk." How did Ghanaians not help Ghana to avoid these years of instability? It is true that government after government struggled to bring the situation under control by solving Ghana's economic and political woes. But it is also true that some, if not all, the governments were corrupt at a point in their leadership, and also used undemocratic means such as detentions without trial, summary trials and convictions, extra-judicial killings, and torture and unlawful confiscation of properties. Corruption denies the citizen his or her due and results in suffering and pain.

¹¹⁵ Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame A. Ninson (eds.), *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana* (London: Codesria, 1989), 3.

Rawlings, on two occasions in his second and last term in office, publicly apologized to Ghanaians for any “excesses” which might have occurred during the reign of the AFRC and PNDC.¹¹⁶ Also in the early 1990s, he “embarked on a low-key national reconciliation exercise by quietly de-confiscating the assets of key opposition politicians that were seized by the AFRC and PNDC regimes.”¹¹⁷ His efforts were viewed by the NPP as not good enough to reconcile the nation.¹¹⁸ Moreover,

...the Rawlings approach to national reconciliation was opaque, piecemeal and selective; it lacked the coherent and well-articulated structure, and was not comprehensive. In addition, the Rawlings approach did not allow for historical clarification or writing of an accurate and complete historical record of human rights violations, and it did not involve the most critical element in any reconciliation process – the people. Finally, that approach missed the opportunity for effecting institutional reforms aimed at preventing human rights violations: the public review of the operations of key state apparatus constitutes an important method for understanding the role of state institutions in fostering human rights violations and how to prevent them.¹¹⁹

6. Immediately Preceding the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC)

International pressure often leads to the formation of truth and reconciliation commissions. Truth and reconciliation commissions have been seen to have inherent benefits of their own rather than be just a replacement or substitute in cases where criminal prosecution is not possible. The Republic of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), created in 1995, took center stage as the world’s eyes were fixed on it for its brilliant initiative to bring an otherwise volatile and polarized situation to peace and normalcy.

¹¹⁶ Attafuah, "An Overview," 126-127.

¹¹⁷ Attafuah, "An Overview," 127.

¹¹⁸ Attafuah, "An Overview," 127.

¹¹⁹ Attafuah, "An Overview," 127.

From 1992 until the present (2016), Ghana has seen six successful democratic elections and for the first and second times, witnessed a successful transfer of power from one political party to another. These gains came with the dawn of the fourth republic, as mentioned. The party in power, together with opposition parties, religious organizations, and civil society worked together to maintain peace and thus enhance economic growth.

However, the past and its abuses were not forgotten. Discussions about the past continued to surface from time to time, with incidents such as the 1979 execution of former heads of state and the abduction and murder of the three high court judges and a retired army officer. Palpable feelings of hurt and bitterness still lingered among a section of the populace who were affected by the abuses. In order to move forward, it became necessary to come face to face with these grievances and find a way of resolving them.

Rawlings ruled the country for the first eight years of the fourth republic. He had also led the last two *coups d'état* the nation had suffered. It was therefore only when Kuffour and his opposition party took over power in January, 2001 that the process of reconciliation could begin.

7. Functions of Reconciliation Commissions

Truth and reconciliation commissions generally aim at providing a forum for victims of human rights abuses to tell their story and thus begin the healing process. According to Meredith Wain, the specific functions of these commissions vary from country to country.¹²⁰ However, the commission first sets out to establish an official and accurate record of the country's past history by documenting human rights abuses of the time in question and then goes further to put forth recommendations and reforms for changes to be made to prevent future occurrences of such

¹²⁰ Meredith Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, (CHRI News, Spring, 2000), 7.

abuses.¹²¹ Priscilla Hayner lays out the five objectives of truth commissions as follows:

- Clarification and acknowledgement of the truth;
- Responding to the needs and interests of the victims;
- Contributing to justice and accountability;
- Outlining institutional responsibility and recommending reforms; and
- Promoting reconciliation and reducing tension resulting from past violence.¹²²

8. Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission (NRC)

On January 11, 2002, President John Kuffour signed into law a bill from the parliament that gave birth to the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). This law known as the National Reconciliation Act (Act 611) enabled the commission to begin the path toward reconciliation. The NRC was modeled on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The only difference was that, while South Africa's commission was able to grant amnesty to rights violators in exchange for the story of their involvement in the crimes committed, Ghana's commission had no such power.

The Old Parliament House in Accra became the venue for the proceedings of the NRC due to its historical importance as the very location for the declaration of Ghana's independence on March 6, 1957.

8.1 Mandate of the NRC

¹²¹ Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, 7.

¹²² Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 24-31.

The NRC's terms of reference are captured in the long title of the Act:

To seek and promote national reconciliation among the people of this country by recommending appropriate redress for persons who have suffered any injury, hurt, damage, grievance or who have in any other manner been adversely affected by violations and abuses of their human rights arising from activities of public institutions and persons holding public office during periods of unconstitutional government and to provide for related matters.¹²³

Under this Act:

.... the NRC is mandated to establish an accurate and complete historical record of abuses perpetrated against individuals by public institutions and office-holders, or by individuals purporting to have acted on behalf of the state during periods of unconstitutional rule. It is also charged with putting forth recommendations for redress and institutional reform to the President.¹²⁴

The mandate focused mainly on the unconstitutional regimes and thus the periods considered are as follows: February 24, 1966 to August 12, 1969; January 13, 1972 to September 23, 1979; and December 31, 1981 to January 6, 1993. In line with its mandate, the NRC started receiving statements of human-rights violations from the victims on September 2, 2002 and ended receiving over 4,311 statements. 2,129 of these statements were listed for public hearings. The commission listened to 79 respondents who addressed allegations made against them.¹²⁵ Some asked for forgiveness. Public hearings began on January 14, 2003.

8.2 Composition of the Commission

The Commission opened regional offices in some other cities of the country. There were regional offices in Kumasi, Takoradi, Bolgatanga, Tamale and Ho. The commission was

¹²³ The National Reconciliation Act, 2002, accessed on January 28, 2016, <http://www.ghanareview.com/reconact.html>

¹²⁴ Meredith Wain, Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission, 7.

¹²⁵ These were those who had been involved in the abuses and were still alive and able to be present at the hearings to be heard as well.

composed of nine members led by Justice Kweku Amua-Sekyi, a retired justice of the Supreme Court of Ghana. Its composition was a reflection of the multifaceted nature of the job at hand.¹²⁶

The rest of members of the commission are as follows:

A Traditional Chief, Uborr Dalafu Labal; two academics - Professor Florence Abena Dolphyne, Former Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana, and Professor Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law of the same University; two leaders of religion, the Most Reverend Charles Palmer-Buckle, a Catholic Bishop and Mauvi Abdul Wahab bin Adam, Ameer (Leader) in Charge of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana, served as members of the Commission. The three other Members are Lieutenant General Emmanuel Alexander Erskine, Former Commander of the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon; Mr. Christian Appiah Agyei, Former Secretary General of the Ghana Trades Union Congress and Dr. Mrs. Sylvia Awo Mansa Boye, Former Registrar of the West African Examinations Council.¹²⁷

The commission set up a series of committees to examine various institutions such as the legal profession, the press, labor and student movements, and chiefs and religious bodies for their roles in human rights violations.

8.3 Some Views and Opinions on the NRC

The NRC had the powers of the court in its hearings and the powers of the police in its investigations. Thus the NRC was empowered to search, enter, and remove any property needed in its investigation as well as the power to subpoena.¹²⁸ However, the NRC could not pass judgment on anyone but could offer recommendations to the government. Cases brought before the NRC would have a public hearing unless deemed inappropriate at the NRC's discretion. The nine commissioners sat behind a bench to conduct these hearings with the petitioners sitting

¹²⁶ Benjamin Mensah, "Reconciliation, how did it go" (October, 2004), accessed on January 29, 2016, <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Reconciliation-how-did-it-go-67547>

¹²⁷ Benjamin Mensah, "Reconciliation, how did it go."

¹²⁸ Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, 8.

opposite them. The proceedings were recorded in English and broadcast live by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to the whole nation. The magic of television made it possible for Ghanaians, including those in the remotest parts of the country and even abroad, to participate in the process by watching. Moreover, the general public including journalists could sit as observers on balconies overlooking the hearings.

Meanwhile, there were some who were of the opinion that the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) intended to use the NRC to boost their political power by tarnishing the image of its predecessor in government, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), whose leader was Rawlings.¹²⁹ Some also argued that, even though rights abuses occurred under various regimes, they were nothing but isolated incidents and nothing compared to the rights abuses that took place in Sierra Leone and South Africa. Therefore, the abuses were not so widespread as to warrant a national reconciliation exercise in order to move forward.¹³⁰

Others were of the view that it was better to “let sleeping dogs lie” and not stir up passions by bringing back the pain of old memories and political tension as well.¹³¹ I consider those against the NRC process to be thinking in line with “false reconciliation” as explained by Schreiter.

8.4 Some Examples of Testimony

This section will be divided into three parts. Each part will offer examples of testimony covering the time of the republic and the military take-over period that followed immediately after. The time periods that are further away from the time of the NRC had lesser testimony as will be shown below. This is probably due to the death of the witness or their inability to recall

¹²⁹ Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, 8-9.

¹³⁰ Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, 9.

¹³¹ Wain, *Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission*, 9.

the events that took place.

First republic and its coup (1960- 1969):

Mr. Alexander Samuel Abbia-Kwakye, a former security guard at the Flagstaff House told the Commission of his unlawful arrest and detention for nine months following the coup that ousted Nkrumah's government in 1966. He said that on February 25, 1966, the day after the coup, an army officer named Zanleringu, who was in charge of the Army Guard Regiment, collected all guns from all the security men, as well as their personal items. They were taken to the Burma Camp, kept there until morning and then taken to the Police Headquarters the next day. There the soldiers made them lie on their backs, facing the sun while hot tea was being sprayed into their eyes. They spent four days at the Police Headquarters before being taken to the Nsawam maximum-security prison, where they were detained for nine months. He said most of the detainees had since died after their release on April 15, 1967.¹³²

A tearful Mr. Emmanuel Adjaye, 67, an ex-guardsman, narrated his ordeal of February 24, 1966, following the overthrow of Nkrumah's government. Adjaye and some of his colleagues reported themselves to the police. They were then beaten up, made to kneel on stone chippings, drilled and prevented from using the rest rooms. Amid sobs, Adjaye told the commission how the torture continued at the Nsawam maximum security prison for three months and how they were kept in a cell with a broken toilet facility and fed on a ration of food without any meat. Adjaye, who was then just over 30 years of age and the father of two children under five, was prevented from receiving visitors and only allowed to write three letters under censorship. When asked for his request from the commission, Adjaye said the following, "Forgiveness is the law of

¹³² "The National Reconciliation Commission Sitings," accessed on February 13, 2016, <http://www.ghanareview.com/int/nrc.html>.

love. I want to forgive all those who have a hand in my mistreatment. I will be happy if something is given out as compensation. I lost all my property in the barracks where I lived.”¹³³

Mr. Obeng Gyan Busia gave evidence of the atrocities suffered by a former Prime Minister of Ghana, the late Professor Kofi Abrefa Busia under the Convention People’s Party (CPP). The CPP confiscated Busia’s houses and four cars.¹³⁴

Second republic and its coup(s) (1969-1979):

Mr. John Alex Hammah, an industrial and public relations consultant, told the Commission how he was unlawfully detained for one and a half years during the National Redemption Council (NRC) regime for financing a coup plot to overthrow General Acheampong. He was tortured until he forgot his own name. Hammah said that in 1973, he returned to Ghana from Nigeria where he lived and worked as a publisher and writer. He came back to sell a book he had written entitled *Farewell Africa*. He raised enough money to get him into the cattle rearing business, which was the most lucrative business at the time and was mainly in the hands of soldiers. Hammah got in touch with a general who offered him cattle for which he paid a huge sum of money. He then arranged a meeting between himself and the general. In the course of their meeting, soldiers pounced on them, beat up the general and arrested him. Hammah was taken to the military barracks where he was tortured by being slapped and kicked in the stomach for several hours.

Apparently, the money he paid the general for the cattle was suspected to be money

¹³³ George Asmah and Tom Mbakwe. "Ghana: No Hiding Place for Former Oppressors; the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), Modeled on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is Now in Full Flight. And what Harrowing Tales are Coming Out! (Around Africa)." *New African* (2003): 26.

¹³⁴ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

meant to finance the coup plot. Hammah was subjected to hours of interrogation each day and as a result, ended up forgetting his own name. He said that for two months he slept on the bare floor without a mattress. Each time he was taken before the military tribunal, the soldiers would dress him up to cover any evidence of torture and make sure he wrote and signed written statements to the effect that he was being well treated. Hammah was charged with the offence of financing the *coup* and sentenced to death by firing squad.

He was taken to the cells at the Nsawam Maximum security prison. All his property, including the huge sum of money he paid the general was confiscated. His wife died because of the pain and the hardship she had to go through due to his absence and detention. His three children did not receive proper education. Hammah prayed the Commission to impress on the government to ensure that the false records about him being a *coup* plotter be removed from his personal records. He also petitioned for a circular to be sent to the foreign missions and airports about his innocence so that he could travel without being interrupted.¹³⁵

Mr. Emmanuel Kwaku Badasu narrated how in 1973 he was arrested without a warrant for alleged subversion and imprisoned. The shock of his arrest killed his mother and later his father died after going on a hunger strike in protest. As if that were not enough, his family accused him of causing his parents' deaths and had not forgiven him since then. Badasu said he had forgiven all those who perpetrated this crime against him and appealed to the commission to recommend his enrollment into the Ghana Police Central Band where he could develop his talent and sing to the praise of God.

Madam Allotey testified how soldiers picked her up on August 10, 1979 with other traders and she was taken to their stores in the Makola market. The traders' stores were forced open and raided of materials (cloth) and money while they were beaten up and driven to the

¹³⁵ "The National Reconciliation Commission Sitings."

Border Guards Headquarters where they were made to sit on the grass under the scorching sun. They were made to hop holding their ears while being beaten up at the same time. Madam Allotey fell ill as a result of this harsh treatment and even had to undergo surgery for pains in her ear.¹³⁶

Elizabeth Adongo testified how she was picked up when 22 years of age from her home in Tamale, Northern Ghana and transported a distance of 651 kilometers to Accra. Upon arrival, she was tortured in place of her elder brother John Adongo, whom the government then accused of being involved in an attempt to overthrow it. She was later detained in in Accra for seven and half months, where she was starved most of the time and not allowed to shower. She refused to give in to the sexual advances of the security personnel, for which she suffered beatings from the butts of their guns. She cried continuously and ended up losing her voice. Her brother has still not been found. She has lived with pain in her neck for the last seventeen years. She requested the Commission to recommend medical treatment for her neck pain and voice defect, as well as compensation for her painful experience.¹³⁷

Third republic and its coup (1979-1992)

The murder of the three judges and a retired Army officer in 1982 came up during the hearings as a landmark case. Several witnesses came up to testify concerning these murders. The three Judges, Mrs. Cecilia Koranteng-Addow, Mr. S. P. Sarkodie and Mr. A. K. Agyepong, and the retired Army Officer Major Sam Acquah, were taken from their homes on June 30, 1982. Later their decomposing bodies were found at the Bundase Military Range on the Accra Plains.

¹³⁶ Benjamin Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹³⁷ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

Witnesses to this case showed anger and bitterness.¹³⁸ Mr. Joachim Amartey Kwei, a PNDC member and a friend of Rawlings, was arrested with five others. They were tried, convicted and then executed on August 10, 1983. The next five paragraphs will be based on this murder case.

Mr. Jacob Yidana, an ex-Chief Superintendent of Police, narrated the ordeal he and his team went through as they investigated this murder. He was arrested and imprisoned. During his time in prison, his first child died and his wife fled to neighboring Togo and then to Canada later.¹³⁹ Yidana had no news of his wife's whereabouts up to the time of giving evidence before the commission. Yidana implied this death and departure resulted from his absence from home to care for his family. He prayed the commission to help him get an explanation from Captain Kojo Tsikata, the then National Security advisor about why he had to serve an extra four years in prison.

Mr. Amepofio said that while he was in detention at the Ministries Police station for hoarding, there was a raid on his house in which classified information on the above murder case was discovered. He was subsequently tortured. He was stripped naked and asked to have sex with the floor. His penis was tied to some bricks and he was asked to dance around the bricks while the soldiers used glowing cigarette butts to burn his shoulders. He spent a total of 22 months in detention.

Mr. William Oduro, who is a former police investigative officer, told the commission how Tsikata planned his arrest for making attempts to investigate this murder case. He subsequently lost his job and was judged and condemned for ten years *in absentia* in 1983. He pleaded with the commission to hear him *in camera* since he had names of individuals and some

¹³⁸ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹³⁹ Mr. Yidana in my view was trying to link his absence to what happened to his wife and child.

countries behind this murder case.¹⁴⁰

Chris Asher Junior,¹⁴¹ a brother to Chris Asher, told the commission about information he got from Lance Corporal Amedeka, his prison mate at the Nsawam maximum security prison, concerning the murder of the three judges and retired Army officer. He gathered from Lance Corporal Amedeka that 32 other people had been listed for elimination after the revolution. Rawlings and Captain Tsikata ordered the arrest of the three judges and retired Army Officer and commanded that their legs be amputated to prevent their ghosts from coming after them. Rawlings popped champagne upon hearing of the success of this murder mission. Chris Asher Junior supported his evidence with a huge pack of papers, which he said bore the record of his interviews with Amedeka. Tsikata denied all these charges when he appeared before the commission.¹⁴²

On February 12, 2004 there was excitement around the Old Parliament House as some supporters of the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), came in to show their solidarity with their Founder and former President Rawlings whom the Commission had subpoenaed to appear before them and give evidence.¹⁴³ The former president was asked to produce an audiotape of the last confession of the late Joachim Amartey Kwei. The late Kwei had been executed for complicity in the murder of the three judges and the retired officer. Former President Rawlings said he did not have the tapes and did not know their whereabouts. The former President swore by the crucifix. He had earlier declared his wish to swear by the Quran, the Bible and a crucifix.¹⁴⁴ He expressed his pain about the murder and wondered why

¹⁴⁰ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴¹ He was given this name, which is similar to that of his elder brother to be mentioned below.

¹⁴² Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴³ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴⁴ At the time of giving evidence to the commission, each witness was required to swear either by the Bible, Quran or Crucifix.

Amartey Kwei linked Tsikata to them. Rawlings, surprised that no further question asked of him, said amid laughter: “O Sir! Is that all?”¹⁴⁵

On June 5, 2003, the evidence of Mr. Kwodwo Ampah, 76, came to an abrupt end when he collapsed and died. All he could say was that members of the National Defense Committee, a militia organization at the Kotoka International Airport in Accra, arrested him. He was suspected of smuggling gold. Ampah, who had migrated to the UK since 1982, only came to give evidence and return to the UK soon after. Ampah’s death caused a change in the seating arrangement as a counselor now sat next to the witness and rubbed the witness’s back to help him or her overcome the pain and bitterness.¹⁴⁶

Journalist Chris Asher was a former editor of the *Palaver* newspaper, which criticized Rawlings’ government. He narrated how he had been in exile since 1982, and prayed the commission to help return his assets, his printing press and houses to him. He was not happy to be in exile and prayed the commission to make it possible for his safe return home to practice his profession.

Mr. Adam Banubi, narrated to the commission how Lance Corporal Peter Azongo then a member of the AFRC, arrested him on the allegation of being a smuggler, beat him up, seized his brand new bike plus his two million CFA francs. Mr. Banubi could not finish his story as he wept uncontrollably.¹⁴⁷

Quite remarkable was the occasion of the handing over to the families for proper burial of the remains of the exhumed bodies of six persons who were executed for treason. The bodies of Godwin Mawuli Drah Goka, Yaw Brefo-Berko, Kyeremeh Gyan, Samuel Boamah Payin, Samuel Charles Aforo and Richard Charles Koomson were located and exhumed at the request

¹⁴⁵ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴⁶ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴⁷ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

of their families. With soft music playing in the background, family members wept as their names were mentioned and even more tears flowed when their remains kept in small coffins and wrapped in white fabric were handed to a member of their families. Even though 18 years had passed since they were executed, family members assisted the pathologists and a forensic anthropologist with information about their clothing such as belts, socks, boots, shoes, slippers, and jewelry to help in the identification process.¹⁴⁸

Osahene Boakye Djan, a former military officer and the former chairman of the AFRC with some of his compatriots (though not Rawlings), apologized to the victims of the brutalities of that regime in the following words, “ I feel very awful and sorry about what happened. We unreservedly apologize for the suffering of the people.” He said the group was seeking to come into contact with the victims to offer their apologies. Boakye Djan called on Rawlings to accept responsibility for the execution of Lance Corporal Sarkodie Addo in 1984.¹⁴⁹

Ex-Corporal Adabuga coming all the way from Oslo, Norway to give evidence narrated how he was involved in the December 31, 1981, *coup* through being misled by Rawlings. He said “I want to express my sincere regrets for all that I did to bring Ghana to its knees under the misguided leadership of Rawlings. I am truly sorry and I, from the bottom of my heart, apologize to all the people of Ghana, particularly those I offended in those sad days in our country. In the name of the Almighty God I humbly ask for forgiveness.” Adabuga said he killed twelve civilians on the orders of Rawlings. He said he would contribute to any endowment fund for the people he had killed and the families he had hurt.¹⁵⁰

Witnesses from the mining town of Tarkwa told the commission about a soldier who was notorious for killing people and dumping their bodies in an abandoned shaft known as the Fanti

¹⁴⁸ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁴⁹ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵⁰ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

mines in the 1980s. The soldier, Sergeant Anthony Charles Apoera who was still alive and in service at the time of giving evidence, came forward and remorsefully regretted his actions.¹⁵¹

9. Nurturing a Culture of Reconciliation

On Tuesday July 13, 2004 the commission ended its hearings. Deep emotions of tears, bitterness, and pain cut through the hearing until its very last day. The chairman of the commission acknowledged the pains the victims had gone through, and in his own words, offered an apology to all as follows: “We must all recognize that there are wounds to be healed--wounds suffered by individuals, wounds suffered by families, wounds suffered by communities and wounds suffered by a whole lot of people in this country. To each and every one of them, we say we are sorry. We share your pains. We hope that with time your wounds would heal.”¹⁵²

The NRC’s process and work will remain part and parcel of Ghana’s history for posterity. The NRC Act also promoted actions like the erection of monuments and the naming of streets in memory of those who had disappeared, the establishment of scholarship funds for children of the victims of torture and killings and the establishment of reparation and rehabilitation funds for victims.¹⁵³ Some of the victims were also offered counseling as a way of helping them to come to terms with what they had been through.

Most notable is that belief in God was a pillar of strength for many of the victims in their quest to come to terms with their experiences.¹⁵⁴ One needs to note that the victims had to swear by a crucifix, the Bible or the Quran before narrating their stories. One of the members of the commission, the Most Rev. Charles Gabriel Palmer Buckle said, “Such a belief strengthened

¹⁵¹ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵² Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵³ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵⁴ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

most Ghanaians to forgive perpetrators of human right violations.”¹⁵⁵ He went on further to remark to one of the victims:

As an Anglican, it is your faith in God, which has sustained you in those hard times. It is the same faith in God that has made you decide to forgive; please, keep the faith and the Good Lord Himself will show the way.¹⁵⁶

There were other scenes of reconciliation apart from that of B. T. Baba and his detainee mentioned earlier. Also, there is at least one example of testimony within each period examined where an apology was rendered or forgiveness sought. In addition to this, the following also apologized for their actions: Warrant Officer Yaw Nkwantabisa apologized to Madam Mary Teye and Mr. Thomas Benefo. Lieutenant Kusi apologized to Madam Ama Akufo, blaming his rather erratic behavior on youthful exuberance. And Squadron Leader George Tagoe apologized to Adummoah Bossman to an appreciative applause from the public in the gallery.¹⁵⁷

Going back to examine the words of Most Rev. Palmer-Buckle, one is prompted to ask what underlies the faith of these victims and many others who are mentioned here that makes them willing to reconcile with those who have caused them so much pain? What is the basis of their faith that makes victims look up to God and then look to the side to forgive their “neighbor”? What is in this faith that will make a perpetrator encourage a victim to look up to God to receive healing?

¹⁵⁵ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵⁶ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

¹⁵⁷ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

CHAPTER 2

PAULINE RECONCILIATION: From the Vertical to the Horizontal

1. Introduction

The previous chapter ended with questions about the sources that may enable and foster the victims to extend forgiveness. To be sure, not everyone who came to testify before the National Reconciliation Committee was of the Christian faith. However, I wish in this chapter to look into the source of the Christian faith that enables forgiveness—the Bible. I have chosen the Bible and particularly the New Testament, because it is the foundational document of the Christian faith. Even though those who came up to give testimony were not theologians, I want to make a case that their reading of the Bible nourished their faith and thus gave them strength enough to extend forgiveness to their victimizers and seek reconciliation.

I have chosen two passages from the Pauline corpus. My reason for choosing Paul is to link the sufferings, humiliations, and abuses of the victims to those of Christ on the cross, a theme that Paul stresses. Not only does Paul emphasize the cross, but he also highlights the effect of this ultimate sacrifice: God gave up his own Son to die out of his love for humanity, thereby paving the way for humanity to receive the gift of divine reconciliation and to be empowered to practice reconciliation.

Who was Paul? Paul refers to himself as a Pharisee (Phil 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:5) and indeed he shows some characteristics associated with Pharisees in his letters. For example, Paul exhibits Pharisaic concern for holiness (1 Cor 5:1-13), believes that true worship is not about performing rituals in the temple, but rather doing what is right and acceptable before God (Rom 12:1-3), has recourse to Scripture to buttress his arguments, and believes in the resurrection of the dead.

Concerning the latter, he holds that Jesus' resurrection is the first fruits of believers' resurrection.¹⁵⁸

Paul makes reference in some of his letters to a time when he persecuted the Christian community (Phil 3:6; Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 15:9). His reason for persecuting the Christian community is not stated but can be inferred from his letter to the Galatians 3:13, where he quotes Deuteronomy 21:23b "for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse." That is, for Paul the Pharisee, Jesus' crucifixion by the Romans seemed to be a death cursed by God.¹⁵⁹ This curse makes Jesus unfit for the title of the righteous one of God (the Messiah). Therefore, those who called Jesus Messiah and Lord were blasphemers and in his zeal to defend the Torah, Paul persecuted the church.

Paul gives an account of how his life changed in the course of persecuting Christ believers (Gal 1:11-12; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). He was encountered by Jesus as risen Lord who said to him, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). Paul came to understand "the encounter as a prophetic call to proclaim to all the nations the good news of what God had done through the crucified and raised Messiah Jesus (Gal 1:15-16)."¹⁶⁰

Paul became convinced that the risen Lord was present through the Holy Spirit in this Jesus movement. His encounter with the risen Lord was evident in his mission as "some of the energy that pours out from the pages of Paul's letters derives from the intensity of his personal experience."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Maria Pascuzzi, *Paul: Windows on His Thought & His World* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2014), 26.

¹⁵⁹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The New Testament, A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 63.

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *The New Testament*, 63.

¹⁶¹ Johnson, *The New Testament*, 65.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, in his quest to describe what Christ Jesus accomplished for the benefit of the human race, uses various metaphors: redemption, expiation, reconciliation, salvation, freedom/liberation, justification, transformation, new creation, sanctification and glorification. A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things or objects that differ from each other but have some characteristics in common.¹⁶² Paul's aim is to explain through these metaphors that, by his death and resurrection, God has made salvation possible through Christ.

In this chapter, I wish to focus on the metaphor of reconciliation. This term in its various forms is used only 12 times in the New Testament and, except for Matthew 5:24, is found exclusively in the Pauline corpus (Rom 5:10-11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20, 22).¹⁶³ Even though there are narratives in the Old Testament that imply reconciliation, such as in the stories of Isaac and Abimelech at Gerar (Gen 26:26-31), and Laban and Jacob at Gilead (Gen 31:22-32:1), "there is no single term or concept to be found to describe reconciliation as such."¹⁶⁴ The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) serves the purpose of expiation by means of cultic rites, including sacrifices presided over by a priest (Lev 23:27 and Lev 16 provide the liturgical details).¹⁶⁵ Hellenistic culture however does not contain any such cultic connotation since reconciliation "is rooted in the secular realm of politics and interpersonal relationship."¹⁶⁶

With Paul, reconciliation takes on a religious dimension to express what God has done for humanity. Why in the first place does Paul speak about reconciliation? Grundmann, in answering this question, argues that this had to do with Paul's own experience of the radical

¹⁶² LiteraryDevices Editors. "Metaphor" LiteraryDevices.net. 2013. <http://literarydevices.net/metaphor/> (accessed November 4, 2014).

¹⁶³ Christoffer H. Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ: Pneumatological Perspectives of Christian Mission in its Third Millennium." *International Review of Mission* 97, no. 386-387 (July, 2008), 257.

¹⁶⁴ Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ," 258.

¹⁶⁵ Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ," 258.

¹⁶⁶ Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ," 258.

turning of his life following his encounter with the Lord.¹⁶⁷ This experience makes Paul confess his unworthiness to be called an apostle (1 Cor 15:9), but he immediately follows this up by saying “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor 15:10). Therefore, when Paul speaks of reconciliation, he speaks not only to those to whom he preaches the Gospel, but also points back to his own experience of God’s gift to him.

In what follows, I describe the flow of Paul’s thought in two passages: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 and Ephesians 2:11-22. In each, the vertical reconciliation God brings about between God and human beings gives birth to the possibility of horizontal reconciliation, the reconciliation between estranged humanity.

2. Reconciliation

In the first place, what is reconciliation? Reconciliation in a soteriological sense points to God’s work of love to bring about a harmonious relationship between God and others.¹⁶⁸ Gary L. Shultz, Jr. points out that Paul is the only author in the New Testament to have used the *katallassō* group of words to speak about reconciliation in a redemptive context.¹⁶⁹

A quick look at the nature of this word reveals three forms of expression. The first one is *katallassō* seen in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, which refers to the restoration of a relationship between estranged humanity or between God and humanity – a change from enmity to friendship.¹⁷⁰ The second is *apokatalassō*, seen in Ephesians 2:16, which refers to a change from a state of broken interpersonal relationships to a state of restoration of such a relationship (from enmity to

¹⁶⁷ Grundmann, "Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ," 258.

¹⁶⁸ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale, 2000), 249-250.

¹⁶⁹ Gary L. Shultz Jr., "The Reconciliation of all Things in Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 442.

¹⁷⁰ Friberg, Barbara, Friberg, Timothy, Miller, Neva F., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000), electronic version.

favor).¹⁷¹ The third one is *katallagē* seen in Romans 5:11 and 2 Corinthians 5:19, which means exchange or profit from exchange as a result of the re-establishing of personal relations.¹⁷²

Obviously, all three involve an alteration from a former state of affairs to a new one and as such there must be a trigger to begin the process and efforts to both push and sustain this process. It is therefore no wonder that the root verb of all three (*allassō*) means to make otherwise or to change, to alter or transform.¹⁷³

As much as words contribute to bringing out the message to be communicated, I do not wish to leave out the context of the passages in which the terminology appears, for context is equally vital in the process of entering into Paul's thought world. So, in the following sections, I set the chosen passages in their literary contexts in my exegetical analysis.

3. Second Corinthians 5:18-20

In Second Corinthians 5:18-20, Paul writes:

¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (NRSV)

The tone of Second Corinthians is reconciling and provocative, compassionate and defensive, forgiving and threatening, joyful and complaining as Paul expresses both his love for and disappointment to the Corinthians.¹⁷⁴ Paul not only rebukes and reprimands but also

¹⁷¹ Friberg, Barbara, Friberg, Timothy, Miller, Neva F., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

¹⁷² Friberg, Barbara, Friberg, Timothy, Miller, Neva F., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

¹⁷³ Bailly, A., *Dictionnaire Grec-Français*, (Paris: Hachette, 1950), 83.

¹⁷⁴ Frank J. Matera, *Second Corinthians, A Commentary* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 1.

continues to preach the working of the gospel.¹⁷⁵ Second Corinthians is unique in the sense of being so intensely personal but at the same time one discovers “a theology no less profound than that in Paul’s letters to the Romans and to the Galatians.”¹⁷⁶

A careful reading of this letter will uncover a theology of reconciliation rooted in the salvific work of Christ that brings about “new creation,” a deeper understanding of the resurrection and the resurrection body that awaits believers, an extensive theology of a God who raises the dead and a vision of Christ as the image of God.¹⁷⁷

2 Cor 5:14-17 gives an insight into the “new creation,” which is important for the discussion on 2 Cor 5:18-20. The mention of “new creation” raises some questions: what does Paul mean by “new creation” and how did he get to the point of saying that reconciliation brings about this “new creation?” Paul places his focus on the cross and the resurrection of Jesus as the source of this new creation. 2 Cor 5:14-17 reads:

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (NRSV)

The death of Christ on the cross and his subsequent resurrection are vital in the assertions of Paul’s ministry, as can be seen in Romans 8:34 and 2 Corinthians 13:4. Paul seeks to ground his teaching as well his apostolic *modus operandi* in the authority of his master, Christ. Thus it is the love of Christ that controls or directs Paul’s behavior (ministry). This makes sense especially

¹⁷⁵ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 2.

¹⁷⁶ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 2.

if Paul had been accused of acting out of his own will.¹⁷⁸ However the expression “the love of Christ” (*hē agapē tou Christou*) can hold two different meanings. It could either refer to Paul’s love for Christ (objective genitive) or to Christ’s love for God (subjective genitive). From the context of this letter, Frank J. Matera is of the view that Christ’s love for Paul (subjective genitive) is what Paul had in mind and it is this love that is manifested in Christ’s saving death.¹⁷⁹

What does Paul make of this love made manifest in Christ’s saving death? Paul affirms Christ’s death (v.14b) and uses verse 15 to state the consequence of this death for those who have benefited from it. The Greek word used in 14b for “for” is *hyper*, which Paul uses extensively elsewhere. Some examples are “Christ died **for** the ungodly” (Rom 5:6), “that Christ died **for** our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3), “who gave himself **for** our sins” (Gal 1:4), and “who gave himself a ransom **for** all” (1 Tim 2:6).

This “for” indicates that Christ’s death was for the benefit of humanity.¹⁸⁰ This benefit can be understood, on the one hand, as Christ’s death as substitutionary in the sense of taking the place of humanity.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, “Christ is the representative of humanity, the new Adam who obediently does God’s will. As such, he represents humanity before God so that what God accomplishes in Christ becomes effective for all humanity. In this sense, Christ’s death is ‘on behalf of’ and ‘for the sake of’ humanity.”¹⁸² Thus, just as the first Adam’s sin of disobedience affected all, the new Adam who obeyed God even until death (Rom 5:15; Phil 2:8)—is the head

¹⁷⁸ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 133.

¹⁷⁹ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 132.

¹⁸⁰ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 134.

¹⁸¹ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 134.

¹⁸² Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 134.

of the human race and as such what happened to him affects all of humanity.¹⁸³ By his obedience, he now leads humanity into grace and life.¹⁸⁴

By saying that “all died,... he died for all” (vv. 14b-15a), Paul sees “humanity as incorporated into its new representative. Consequently, when the representative died, humanity died in the representative, thereby dying to the powers of sin, death, and law that the representative overcame.”¹⁸⁵ Paul also implies that Christ’s death makes it possible for all humans to die to themselves in order to receive the gift of new life.¹⁸⁶ Even though this gift is offered to everyone, “it must be received and appropriated in faith.”¹⁸⁷ It is by baptism that a Christian dies into Christ and also dies to sin (Rom 6:1-11).

The overcoming of sin and death needs now be realized in the life of those who have accepted this gift. Thus, “the living may no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died and rose for them” (v. 15b) –they must now live for Christ. This shows Paul’s understanding of enslavement to sin as fundamentally egocentric and self-seeking.¹⁸⁸ By stressing that those who have received this gift ought to manifest it in such a manner, Paul creates a circle of love – “Jesus’ love, revealed most powerfully in his dying for us, has created the possibility of our walking in the way of self-giving love for the sake of others, and it is through such loving service to others that we express our love for him.”¹⁸⁹

The consequences of the expression of this love are then laid out in verses 16 and 17. Those who have received Christ from the moment of baptism (from now on) are to regard no one according to the flesh. Fleshly activity is an activity that is devoid of God’s inspiration and

¹⁸³ Thomas D. Stegman, *Second Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 136.

¹⁸⁴ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 134.

¹⁸⁵ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 134.

¹⁸⁶ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 137.

¹⁸⁷ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 137.

¹⁸⁸ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 137.

¹⁸⁹ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 137.

empowerment.¹⁹⁰ Thus to regard someone according to the flesh is “to look at them from a merely human perspective or, worse, through lenses scratched and distorted by selfishness and falsehood.”¹⁹¹

Paul then turns to give an example of his own experience and that of others as well as to make reference to a time when he knew Christ according to the flesh. Verse 16b reads “we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.” What does this mean for Paul in his experience? Thomas D. Stegman explains that “according to the flesh” (*kata sarka*) serves as an adverb modifying the verb “knew” and not as an adjective modifying “Christ.”¹⁹² Thus “Paul refers to his days as a Pharisee zealous for the Jewish law, when he regarded Jesus as a troublemaker, as one who played fast and loose with the law and whose end was an accursed death (Gal 3:13; see Deut 21:23). But in light of his encounter with the risen Jesus, Paul no longer regards him in this manner.”¹⁹³

In addition to what might be called an epistemological transformation, Paul describes a second consequence in verse 17. Those who have been baptized in Christ are a “new creation.” Paul’s language of “a new creation” comes from Second Isaiah (Isa 42:9, 43: 18-19, 48:6 and 65:17). Isaiah 43:18-19a states... “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing.” However, whereas Isaiah has in mind a cosmic renewal that will affect the whole of creation, Paul here sees this new creation as the believer “in Christ.”¹⁹⁴ This idea of “new creation” appears again in Ephesians 2:15 and 4:24 as “new humanity” where Paul describes the human person who has been made new in Christ.

¹⁹⁰ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 138.

¹⁹¹ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 138.

¹⁹² Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 138.

¹⁹³ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 138.

¹⁹⁴ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 137.

Grundmann captures the message and importance of this “new creation” in the following lines:

...the new creation is not anti-historical nor is it a-historical. As with the first creation, so the new creation is wholly an act of God *ex-nihilo* without any reason, except that life should thrive. Keeping the promise to “never again curse the ground because of humankind,” God does not annihilate the world or the individual, which, tragically, humans do anyway. Instead, God changes the hearts and minds of people (see Jer 31:31-34) so that they are enabled to further life to the fullest in accordance with the creator’s intentions.¹⁹⁵

The journey to the new creation (vv. 13-17) is what Paul refers to in verse 18 by saying that “everything comes from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.” In the new creation, God has overcome sin through the Christ event. Whereas sin brought about a condition of enmity between God and humanity, as well as between human beings, Paul insists that God has acted to bring about a new possibility. God, the offended party among the two (God and humanity), is the one who reaches out to reconcile. In talking about the “offended party” Stegman notes that “the New Testament never speaks of God as our enemy; rather, it is we who rebelled and became his enemies. God in himself is pure love; he is never hostile to human beings, even those who rebelled against him.”¹⁹⁶ In verse 18b Paul then lays claim to the ministry (service) of reconciliation which he has received as an ambassador of Christ.

In verse 19a Paul reiterates that Christ is the agent through whom God enacts reconciliation and forgiveness. The difference from verse 18 is that Paul changes “us” to “the world.” Is Paul be referring to two different objects of reconciliation? Matera suggests that this is unlikely, since Paul follows immediately in verse 19b stating that God was “not counting their

¹⁹⁵ Grundmann, “Reconciliation and the New Identity in Christ,” 261.

¹⁹⁶ Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 142.

trespasses against them.” Paul is then “primarily referring to the world of human beings. That is, by means of Christ, God was reconciling humanity to himself.”¹⁹⁷

The phrase “not counting their trespasses against them” (19b) is critically important as it helps to explain the necessity for this reconciliation. Humanity had sinned by not obeying God’s commandments.¹⁹⁸ Paul makes clear the relationship between sin and the coming of Christ by saying that “Christ died for our sins and was raised to justify us” (Rom 4:25). Paul uses “count,” a term from accounting, to make the point again that “through Christ’s death ‘for all’ God has wiped clear from the debit ledger the transgressions of those who have availed themselves of his gift of reconciliation.”¹⁹⁹ The sins that created this enmity are therefore taken away.

Paul concludes verse 19 similarly as he did verse 18 by making a reference to the ministry given to the church. However, there is a slight difference between these endings as the “ministry of reconciliation” (v.18) changes to the “message of reconciliation” (v. 19). This change from “ministry” to “message” throws light on “the work of proclamation that this ministry entails and that Paul will now embark upon as he calls upon the Corinthians to be reconciled to God (v. 20).”²⁰⁰

A closer look at these three verses reveals the following structure:

A verse 18a: the source of this reconciliation (*katallaxantos*), God who is the initiator while humans receive this reconciliation.

B verse 18b the means through which this reconciliation is brought about.

C verse 18c: the reconciliation (*katallagēs*) mission given to us (Paul and his co-workers) and by extension, the church)

¹⁹⁷ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 141.

¹⁹⁸ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 141.

¹⁹⁹ Stegman, *Second Corinthians* 142.

²⁰⁰ Matera, *Second Corinthians*, 141.

D verse 19a: God through Christ was reconciling (*katallassōn*) trespassers to himself out of God's mercy and love.

C' verse 19b: we (Paul and his co-workers, and by extension, the church) have received the message of reconciliation (*katallagēs*) from God.

B' verse 20a: since God makes his appeal through us, we are ambassadors of Christ.

A' verse 20b: An appeal to respond positively to this reconciliation (*katallagēte*) initiated by God.

God initiates the process of reconciliation (A, A') and then works through his agent, Christ (B, B'), from whom Paul and his co-workers have received the message of reconciliation making them ambassadors of Christ who possess this message of reconciliation (C, C'). D, as central to the structure, is pivotal. It points to what God did, not because of human merit, but from God's own benevolence. In the words of Martin, "the cosmic transformation, implied in v. 19, is recast in Paul's hands, in such a way that we cannot fail to see that at its heart is the forgiveness of sins and a new relationship with God through Christ that unites us with our creator as reconciled persons."²⁰¹

A careful look at the position of the Greek verb for reconciliation reveals an interesting trend. When God is the subject of reconciliation, the verb is in the active voice as in A and D (*katallaxantos*). When others are the subject of this reconciliation, Paul employs the passive voice (*katallagēte*). This pattern further buttresses the point that God is the initiator of this process of reconciliation and then delegates power to human agents who support the process to facilitate it or to be beneficiaries by being reconciled to God.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Martin, Word Biblical Commentary, 2 Corinthians, 138.

²⁰² Baawobr, "Paul's Call for Reconciliation and its Relevance for the Church with Particular Reference to Africa," 184.

Second Corinthians 5:18-20 shows how God is the initiator who has brought about reconciliation between God and humans (vertical reconciliation). But this also entails a horizontal dimension of reconciliation. This horizontal dimension involves “healing and restoration and the relationship between peoples.”²⁰³ Paul illustrates this pattern when he calls the Corinthians to receive back in love a member of the community whom they had punished: indeed, Paul himself takes the initiative in reaching out in forgiveness (2:5-11).²⁰⁴ Paul thus leads by example and calls upon the Corinthians to do the same. He emphasizes this forgiveness in two situations he talks about later in the letter: 6:11-7:7 describes Paul’s efforts to bolster reconciliation between himself and the community and chapters 8-9 contain his exhortations to be generous of the collection for the church of Jerusalem, which symbolizes the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles.

In 6:11-7:7, Paul first appeals to the affection of the Corinthians saying that he had opened his heart to them (verse 11) and as such all of them have a place in his heart (verse 11). He expresses his desire to be loved by the Corinthians in return (6:12-13). He then speaks about various “lights” (good deeds) and “darknesses” (bad deeds) as he enjoins the Corinthians to do away with the roadblocks erected by the false (super) apostles. These roadblocks were hindering the Corinthians from opening their hearts to Paul and thus blocking their path to holiness. Paul denies having wronged anyone (7:2) and then speaks of his pride in the Corinthians. His joy knows no bounds despite all his troubles (7:4). The troubles he talks about are those that arose from the opposition to his ministry and his concern for Titus (see 2:12-13) and the Corinthians. Paul is consoled when Titus returns to him with good news from Corinth (7:7).

²⁰³ Thomas D. Stegman, “What does the New Testament say about Reconciliation?,” in *Theological and Pastoral Approaches: A Reconciliation Reader*, edited by Thomas A. Kane (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 37.

²⁰⁴ For more on this passage, see Stegman, *Second Corinthians*, 62-68.

In Second Corinthians 8:1-9:15, on the topic of generosity, Paul begins by addressing the Corinthians as brothers to show that it is the sense of believers belonging to one family – a motivation to love, to care and to give (8:1). Paul makes reference to the Macedonians who had also joined the project of giving, and urges the Corinthians do likewise and thereby excel in this aspect (generosity) of their lives (8:6-7). By excelling in giving, the Corinthians become spiritually rich (8:9). They then follow in the footsteps of Jesus who, though was wealthy, stripped himself to become poor in order to give humans access to salvific riches. Jesus gave up all he had out of love for the Corinthians, and they must likewise do the same--for God gives to us, so that we can share with others (9:10). The goal of the sharing is not only to bring relief to believers in Jerusalem, but to also encourage this act of thanksgiving to God (9:12).

With the link between the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of reconciliation set forth in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, I now turn to a passage from Ephesians that focuses more on the horizontal dimension of reconciliation.

4. Ephesians 2:11-22

The purpose of the Letter to the Ephesians is to portray the nature of the church to those who had converted to Christianity from a pagan heritage and to remind the now predominantly Gentile church of its Jewish roots.²⁰⁵ The Letter's main theme is that the good works of God's grace has brought Jews and Gentiles together to form a single community of faith. This is the thrust of 2:11-22²⁰⁶, in which Paul²⁰⁷ states:

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical

²⁰⁵ Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon: Interpretation*, 4.

²⁰⁶ Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon: Interpretation*, 7.

²⁰⁷ I do acknowledge that not all authors hold the view that the Letter to the Ephesians comes from Paul's hand (but from a later hand). But for the purposes of this paper, I will sufficiently refer to “Paul” as the author.

circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.
(NRSV)

As in the previous section of this chapter (3.), the themes of sin (enmity), Christ, and his actions, forgiveness and reconciliation take center stage again here. How does Paul preach his message in Ephesians? Amy Plantinga Pauw argues that the center of gravity of the church in the first century had shifted from Jewish Palestine westward across the eastern part of the Mediterranean and even beyond. As a result, the church was becoming more and more Gentile and tended repeatedly to forget or deny “its roots in God’s promises to Israel, arrogating to itself exclusive ownership of the household of God and sole rights to the covenants of promise.”²⁰⁸ It is against this background of Gentile arrogance that Eph. 2:11-22 urges the church not to forget its past.²⁰⁹

The second chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians can be divided into two sections (vv. 1-10 and vv. 11-22) which are related by the use of the contrast schema “formerly” (*pote*) and “now” (*de* and *nyni de*) to tell the story of the status of believers from their old lives to their new

²⁰⁸ Amy Plantinga Pauw, "Theological Meditations on Ephesians 2:11-22," *Theology Today* 62. 1(2005), 79.

²⁰⁹ Pauw, "Theological Meditations on Ephesians 2:11-22," 79.

lives in Christ. The chapter begins with a connector “so then” to show the link to God’s power in Christ (1:19-23). Ephesians 2:1-10 contains three statements. The first deals with the believers former sinful condition (vv. 1-3), the second with the change in the believers’ live made possible by Christ (vv. 4-7), and the third with the nature of this salvation (vv. 8-10). The believers’ former life was marked by death, sin, and a worldly way of seeing things. Paul also includes himself among those marked by this plight, as he switches from the second person plural “you” in verses 1-2 to the first person plural “we” in verse 3.

The contrast schema comes in as a bridge between the first and second statements, as the contrast between the former and the now is as great as the difference between death (2:1) and life (2:5). Paul compares Christ’s death and resurrection to what has happened to the believer. However, “although Paul does not neglect future eschatology, his emphasis here is on realized eschatology. What God did for Christ at the resurrection/ascension, God already has done in the life of the believer.”²¹⁰

The Greek word “for” (*gar*) is used twice in verses 8 and 10. In verse 8, “for” stresses the believers’ total reliance on God for God’s saving action. In verse 10, “for” expresses God’s wish for the believer to respond to what God has achieved in Christ by performing good works. It is what this good work entails that takes us into the second part of the chapter. This part can be outlined as follows:

- Contrast Schema: those who were far away have been brought near (2:11-13).
- Peace and unity hymn (2:14-18).
- The result of this unity (2: 19-22).

²¹⁰ Pauw, "Theological Meditations on Ephesians 2:11-22," 56.

What the believers' life should look like is what is spelled out in 2:11-22. *Dio* (Therefore) serves as the bridge or connector to 2:1-10 and is followed by the imperative "remember" in verse 12 (which is the only imperative in chapters 1–3 found in the entire Letter).²¹¹ *Dio* also "sums up Paul's argument thus far and applies it to the Gentiles. He invites them to recall their preconversion state: by descent they were Gentiles and were called 'uncircumcised' by those who claimed physical circumcision, which is a product of man's hands."²¹² Paul uses five phrases to describe what the Gentiles should remind themselves of (v. 12) and then immediately goes on to state what has now happened to those who were once far off (v. 13) but are now in Christ.

According to Bertram L. Melbourne, "the tragedy of the Gentiles' former desolation is turned into the joy of their reconciliation in Christ. No longer are they separated from Christ; they are now "in Christ," that is, in the sphere of new possibilities."²¹³ The *hymeis* ("you") links up with the *hymeis ta ethnē* ("you Gentiles") in verse 11 for the purpose of emphasis. Also the verb *egenēthēte* ("have been brought near" v. 13) is aorist passive and thus serves as an "indication of the final decisive act of admission to the Divine presence."²¹⁴ This admission was accomplished through the shedding of blood, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.

In verses 14-18, Paul takes a break to proclaim how this nearness came to pass through Christ. Paul emphasizes the results of this nearness by mentioning four times the "peace" and unity achieved by Christ "in his flesh"(v. 14) and "through the cross" (v. 16).

The *Autos* in v. 14a (*Autos gar estin hē "eirēnē" hēmōn,*) places emphasis by saying that Christ, no one else but Christ is our peace. Christ secured peace by wiping out the enmity

²¹¹ Charles A. Ray Jr. "Removing the Wall (Eph 2:1-22), "The Theological Educator 54 (1996), 56.

²¹² Bertram L. Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?" *The Journal of Religious Thought* 57-58, no. 2-1 (2001), 109.

²¹³ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?" 111.

²¹⁴ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?" 112.

created by sin. Christ has given us a vertical reconciliation that paves the way for horizontal reconciliation.²¹⁵ The importance of the divine intervention shows how necessary the vertical is to the horizontal.

Of interest is the statement “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (v. 14b) which Ray states has been a subject of much debate. For Ray, Paul “may have been referring to the balustrade in the Temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the women. Posted on this wall were warnings of death to any Gentile who passed through its gates.”²¹⁶ William Barclay quotes the inscription as reading, “Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whomsoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue.”²¹⁷ Francis Beare is of the view that “the wall of partition in the temple was merely a token of the whole system of legal observances which constituted a barrier to fellowship between Jew and Gentile.”²¹⁸ Christ’s sacrificial death has broken down the wall and with it the Jewish privileges,²¹⁹ and superior feelings,²²⁰ thus uniting the Jews and the Gentiles. This coming together creates “one new humanity in place of two” (v. 15). The Greek word used here for “new” is not *neos* but *kainos*. Even though both *neos* and *kainos* are translated into English as “new,” *neos* imparts a temporal idea but *kainos* expresses and emphasizes quality,²²¹ “a qualitative newness, . . . a remarkable or unheard-of character.”²²² This new humanity “fashioned by God is thus a humanity qualitatively

²¹⁵ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?," 112.

²¹⁶ Ray, "Removing the Wall (Eph 2:1-22)," 57.

²¹⁷ William Barclay, *Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 111-112.

²¹⁸ Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York, NY: Abingdon, 1953), 654.

²¹⁹ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?" 112.

²²⁰ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?" 114.

²²¹ Melbourne, "Ephesians 2:13-16: Are the Barriers Still Broken Down?," 114.

²²² William R. Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," *Interpretation* 45 (1991), 281.

different from that which has gone before. It is one in which Jew and Gentile are at peace with each other and with God.”²²³

By one Spirit, the two groups have access to the Father. In effect, God in Christ has removed every hostility that separated people by making reconciliation. Therefore, peace and unity must now be lived out in the lives of all.

In Christ both the Jews and the Gentiles are one. Christ has made them into a “new humanity.” The new humanity is now made up of those who had received the benefit (gift) of being the “new creation.” In other words, the “new creation” makes possible the “new humanity.” The atoning death of Christ has made this possible by destroying enmity and bringing in peace and reconciliation.

There are a number of examples of how Ephesians make the transition from the “indicative” of salvation to the “imperative” of living in unity as a reconciled people. In 3:6, Paul states again that the Gentiles have now been included in God’s universal plan of salvation with its privileges and have also been made equal to the Jews. He stresses the word “together” in stating this equality. He then lists these privileges as being heirs together with the Jews, members together of one body and sharers together in the promises of Christ Jesus.

In chapters 4-6, Paul urges the Ephesians to exhibit living as a way of imitating Christ who had won this salvation for them on the cross. They are exhibit humility not because they see others as being superior but because they do not regard themselves to better than them. Christ demonstrated this humility in serving, respecting and loving others (4:1). The Ephesians are to be united just as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united. It is the Holy Spirit who has called the Jews and Gentiles to make up the one body of Christ -- giving them a shared hope in

²²³ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 282.

Christ (4:4). The believers are united by their faith in one Lord Jesus Christ and this faith identifies them with Christ's death and resurrection (4:6).

To truly become united in Christ, the believers are to put off the old life with its evil practices and embrace holiness according to the teachings of Christ (4:17-22). Embracing this holiness will mean putting on a new life. The new life is the new creation as a result of brought about by Christ death of the cross (4:24 and 2 Cor. 5:17). This "new creation" is to be like God in true righteousness and holiness eschewing falsehood, brooding over anger, stealing, gossip and slander (4:26-29). The Ephesians are to imitate God (5:1-7), walk as children of Light (5:8-14), live wisely (5: 15-20) and live responsibly (5:21-6:9).

We pick up this theme of reconciliation again in 2:19-22 in which the word *xenoi* (strangers) appears in 2:19 as earlier seen in 2:12. By living the new life, the believers who had been alienated from citizenship are now *synpolitai* (fellow citizens) with the saints (v.19). There are three striking images that help us to understand the peace spoken about in the verse 14: kingdom, family, and building. With these three images, Paul brings believers progressively closer and closer.

The Gentiles are now citizens of the kingdom, which is in contrast with their former lives when as strangers and aliens, they neither had knowledge of the kingdom nor access to its resources.²²⁴ As such, they had no claim to these privileges that come with being a citizen. With the situation now changed "they are fellow citizens with the saints, such as Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Deborah, Elijah, Ruth, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Along with their newly recognized ancestors in the faith, they can fully enjoy the benefits of the kingdom."²²⁵ These images of strangers and aliens reveals one way in which humans draw boundaries with an aim of securing

²²⁴ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

²²⁵ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

safety and identity. By exclusion, the boundary is drawn between “us” and “them.” The “them” are the strangers and aliens.

The Gentiles then move from being citizens who could live in different households to living under the same roof as “members of the household of God” (v. 19b). Finally the image of the building—“built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (20a) may appear to be changing the sense of intimacy as it is less personal. However, it rather proves to be maintaining the course, as the stones in the walls of a building are inseparable.²²⁶

Everything in the wall is closely knit together and as such this “is the closeness of the members of the habitation of God to one another and to the Lord. This habitation is no ordinary building, however, but much more like a body, the body of God. It is the dwelling place of God.”²²⁷ The people now become God’s dwelling place (God’s Holy temple) with Christ as the cornerstone. In the end “when time merges into eternity, the only thing left of history will be this temple that God has built...the people in whom God dwells.”²²⁸ The reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile in one body is also their reconciliation to God.

Paul’s message of reconciliation is that those who have now been reconciled in Christ through the cross must show “appreciation” by loving one another as God has loved them. By Christ’s death on the cross “humanity is rescued from the pervasive alienation and hostility that contaminates not only relationships among persons but also relationships between persons and God. In Christ these relationships are now characterized by reconciliation and peace.”²²⁹

On this note of peace, I would like to bring this section to a close with Long’s story of an event that took place at the chapel of the World Council of Churches in Geneva at the end of the

²²⁶ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

²²⁷ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

²²⁸ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

²²⁹ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 281.

Second World War. The mayors of Dresden, Germany and Coventry, England brought pieces of bomb shrapnel obtained from their respective cities. These two cities were the most bombed during the war. These pieces of shrapnel were then taken and melted, molded into a cross, a graphic architectural representation of peace.²³⁰ Indeed, Christ has made possible the peace that neither bombs nor negotiations could achieve.²³¹

I have proposed above a Christian vision of reconciliation from Paul's letters to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians: the vertical reconciliation as a gift is to be expressed in the horizontal reconciliation as a task. Ghanaians of the Christian faith and the NRC for that matter have also received this task of reconciliation with its roots in the New Testament. As much as the New Testament offers a theological foundation for them to come to the point of forgiveness, it also offers ideas for the way forward in the process of reconciliation. This task of reconciliation expressed in the impact of the NRC and the way forward is what I will be looking at in next chapter.

²³⁰ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 282.

²³¹ Long, "Ephesians 2:11-22," 283.

CHAPTER 3: POST NRC AND THE WAY FORWARD

1. Introduction

The previous chapter concluded that the New Testament offers a theological foundation for victims to be able to forgive and thereby begin the path to reconciliation. This chapter will look at the impact of the NRC and then propose- through the light shed by the New Testament—a way forward to deepen reconciliation and healing.

Truth and reconciliation commissions²³² are made possible as a result of political negotiations, agreement, and compromise.²³³ Even though the scope, mandate, and time period of an investigation may partly depend on the circumstances and needs of a country, political decision-making plays a major role regarding the establishment and outcome of the work of these commissions.²³⁴ For example, in Peru, the decision initially made that would have granted amnesty to former government and military officers was taken back public pressure mounted against it. The amnesty decision was scrapped because it was found to be unconstitutional.²³⁵

The wide dissemination of a commission's report is very important in order to help accomplish its purpose, which is to reveal abuses of the past, as well as to heal and rebuild the society.²³⁶ Unfortunately, in some countries like Nigeria and Uganda only the president and government officials saw the report. In Guatemala the report which listed gross abuses by the military was so feared that it led to the assassination of the chairman of the commission. It also led to the assassination of the Catholic Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi.

²³² With the exception of South Africa and Ghana, these commissions are usually called “Truth” commissions. The name depends on the explicit mandate given to them.

²³³ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²³⁴ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²³⁵ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²³⁶ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

There is need for the public to know the findings of such truth commissions. This will require reliance on very active informational and educational media to make this information accessible to all. An example of how not to do this is that of South Africa's truth commission which issued a report of about 4,000 pages.²³⁷ In this instance, there was a need to have a summarized version because very few people have the will to read such a volume.

Finally, it is important that the government shows the will to implement the recommendations of the commission. This is necessary because "the commission would be seen to be successful if the Government accepted an appreciable percentage of its recommendations. An instance is Peru, where 12,000 testimonies were recorded but only 100 of the most egregious cases were actually followed up."²³⁸ This does not support the work of the commission.

Some governments tend to set aside the report and do little or nothing to implement its recommendations because they are implicated in it. Political commitment in implementing the commission's recommendations nourishes national reconciliation.

2. The NRC's Immediate Impact

The Ghanaian National Reconciliation Commission completed its report in October 2004 and publicized in April, 2005. What were the commission's findings? I will summarize them into its conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions:

- Most of the abuses happened when military regimes were in control—84% of abuses

²³⁷ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²³⁸ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

happened in the time of the AFRC and the PNDC;²³⁹

- Most of the executions happened in Accra and Kumasi, and abuses were generally concentrated in the Greater Accra, Ashanti and the Western Regions; most violations took place against adult males;²⁴⁰
- The period of the colonial government contributed to the legacy of human rights abuses;²⁴¹
- Law enforcement institutions and the armed forces were responsible for the highest percentage of abuses.²⁴²

Recommendations:

- A monument should be erected displaying the names of the victims;
- A scholarship program should be set up for victims;
- Transparency, fairness and the highest level of professionalism should be ensured in the military, the police and the prison system. In this regard, the government ordered the respective councils of these security services to study the NRC's recommendations and

²³⁹ "Ghana politics: NRC's report is published." *Economist Intelligence Unit: Country ViewsWire* 7 June 2005. *Academic OneFile*, accessed on March 23, 2016, http://proxy.bc.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA133057839&v=2.1&u=mmlin_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=ff3ae5a54eb9644db1c8126828b542ba

²⁴⁰ "Ghana politics: NRC's report is published."

²⁴¹ Truth commission Ghana, *United States Institute of Peace*, January 14, 2003, accessed on March 23, 2016, <http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-ghana>

²⁴² Truth commission Ghana.

implement them; and

- A reparation and rehabilitation fund should be established for victims of human rights abuses who appeared before the NRC.²⁴³

2.1 Immediate Achievements of the NRC

The NRC succeeded in documenting an accurate record of Ghana's past human rights abuses. One may argue that not every abuse that took place is in the record but at least what has been documented is worth the investment to enable the process of reconciliation. As we saw in chapter one, at the NRC's public hearings, many victims told their stories of abuse. In fact, "the Final Report did outline the context and historical factors that led to the political upheavals and abuses of the past, as well as examining and documenting the role of institutions. In this way, the Commission has been credited with exposing Ghanaians to the full extent of past abuses, many of which were previously unknown."²⁴⁴

By narrating their stories these victims broke the silence that had covered the instances when citizens were denied their fundamental human rights and stripped of their dignity. The shame of these occurrences also had an impact on those who cheered the perpetrators or turned a blind eye on these events. Many hoped that these exposures would help prevent any future recurrence of such abuses.

One cannot forget the many instances when victims were willing to forgive their

²⁴³ "Ghana politics: NRC's report is published."

²⁴⁴ Nahla Valji, "Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission: A Comparative Assessment," *International Center for Transitional Justice*, September 2006, accessed on March 21, 2016, https://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/themes/international_courts_tribunals/GhanaCommission.pdf

perpetrators, as well as when perpetrators regretted their actions. Robert Kwame Ameh argues that “the choice of an NRC is a win-win situation in which even perpetrators stand to gain. The offer of immunity from future criminal or civil prosecution for any person who gives incriminating evidence was a good motivation to come forward with the truth.”²⁴⁵

As mentioned in the conclusions of the NRC report, Rawlings and Tsikata appeared before the commission to answer charges of human rights abuses leveled against them. Considering the positions these two men held in the former government of Ghana, many saw their appearance before the NRC as an important victory for the rule of law. Dr. Edward Mahama, the leader of the People’s National Convention,²⁴⁶ said, “...it is an important milestone in Ghana’s history...Rawlings for the first time had put aside his rebellious and lawless character and submitted himself to the laws of the land...By that event, we are establishing the rule of law in Ghana; we have established that nobody is above the law...”²⁴⁷

Their appearances before the commission also sent a message to all citizens that no matter who they are or what position they hold in government, there are chances that their actions will one day be revealed to the public eye. Ameh notes that even though those exposed had immunity, this “offer of immunity also signals the end of impunity as amnesty is only offered in exchange of truth about human rights abuses perpetrated. The whole reconciliation process then constitutes a cautionary tale to public officers that no matter how long it takes, they will one day be called upon to account for their stewardship.”²⁴⁸

Indeed, disrespect for the rule of law in the sense that some leaders saw themselves to be

²⁴⁵ Robert Kwame Ameh, "Doing Justice After Conflict: The Case for Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 21 (2006) 108.

²⁴⁶ A political party.

²⁴⁷ Crusading Guide General News of Tuesday, 17 February 2004
<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/NRC-Was-Set-Up-Because-Of-Rawlings-Mahama-52004>

²⁴⁸ Ameh, "Doing Justice after Conflict," 109.

above that law led them to violate the rights of fellow citizens. Their disregard for the law led them to use the powers of state institutions like the Army and other security services, the Bureau of National Investigations, and even the Judiciary to perpetrate these abuses. As seen in the NRC's report, a recommendation was made concerning these state institutions in which commission asked the government to instruct these institutions' leaders to study the NRC's report.

On the negative side, there were instances where some observers charged that the chairman of the commission was biased. These observers based their assertion on certain comments the chairman made when he addressed some witnesses: these comments seemed to have arisen from differences he must have had with some past government(s). This perception was not good for the image of the NRC, as it could serve to derail the process of reconciliation.

As mentioned above, it is true that the NRC did indeed chalk some successes, but the biggest challenge on the path to reconciliation lies with the government which must muster the courage and necessary will to implement the recommendations that came out of the NRC's report.

The government started its reparation program in 2006 when a reparations²⁴⁹ committee was mandated to ensure compliance with the commendations of the NRC.²⁵⁰ The government however, showed little commitment to the reparation plan, blaming its lack of action on a lack of funding.²⁵¹ Hayner notes that in a situation like this one should tread cautiously before blaming the government because "many governments will find it impossible to provide direct financial compensation to each and every survivor at anything close to the level that would be

²⁴⁹ Reparation " is a general term that encompasses a variety of types of redress, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantee of nonrepetition." Taken from Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 171.

²⁵⁰ Truth commission Ghana.

²⁵¹ Truth commission Ghana.

proportional to the loss suffered, especially where a family member was killed or disappeared.”²⁵² There were also no plans made for the dissemination of the NRC’s final report. This report, although available commercially, was beyond the reach of the man in the street.²⁵³ I find this situation unacceptable because as much as I agree that government may not have enough funds to provide monetary compensation, it is hard to imagine the government was unable to fund the dissemination of such an important document.

These challenges, however, do not point ultimately to a failure of the work of the NRC. Even though some, especially those who were in opposition parties at the time of the NRC, pointed an accusing finger at it for being an appendage of the NPP government, there was no evidence to support such a claim. Nevertheless, it is necessary that an environment meant to promote reconciliation be devoid of such suspicious elements.

It is important to note that reconciliation is a process that takes time and thus patience to come to fruition. Just as a physical wound takes time to heal, so a process of reconciliation must be approached with patience. What is important is to set the ball rolling by first recognizing the presence of the wound and seeking its proper treatment and this I think is what the NRC has done. It is twelve years now since the NRC report was submitted to the government and these twelve years have seen three different Presidents come to power through the ballot box—Kuffour (2000- 2008), John Evans Atta Mills (2009-2012)²⁵⁴ and currently John Dramani Mahama (2012-present). Never in Ghana’s history has there been such a long period of governance without military interference. I wish to stress that the NRC brought Ghanaians to an awareness of what happened in times of military takeovers and the causes of these takeovers. In

²⁵² Priscilla Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths, Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 171.

²⁵³ Truth commission Ghana.

²⁵⁴ Mills died in office in July, 2012.

doing so, the country has benefitted from the lessons learned from the stories told. Hopefully Ghana will not take such a violent route again in its history.

I will say without any limit of doubt that the goals of the NRC were good enough and worth all the effort and energy. The NRC went back into the history of Ghana to unearth the structures that promoted impunity and human rights abuses. The NRC was an opportunity for the country to engage in self-evaluation and to gain self-knowledge. It provided some answers to questions such as what went wrong in the area of governance? What were the internal and external causes that led to conflict? These questions have now received some answers, even if the answers do not satisfy a hundred percent of our doubts. With answers to such questions, the country can now set in motion a mechanism to change the structures that contributed to failures in government and to human rights abuses.

Contrary to those who opposed the coming into being of the NRC, I am strongly of the view that the emotions expressed during the NRC hearings, if left hidden or suppressed, could come up again to haunt the nation. Yes, it is true that in some cases it was difficult to find evidence to support the witnesses' claims, but that notwithstanding, the fact that some perpetrators apologized openly to their victims and sometimes to the whole nation is heartwarming enough. Nor can we forget that some victims also openly offered an olive branch to their perpetrators.

With the NRC hearings over and a few years already passed, it is my hope that the lessons learned will continue to remind Ghanaians of the need to be united in order to forge ahead for a brighter future as a nation. There is still a long road to the fulfillment of the recommendations made to the government by the NRC. To the recommendations, I would like to add that the importance of revising and strengthening the role of civil society and religious

groups in the reconciliation process. Reconciliation is a process that takes time to fulfill and depends largely on the government's will and the resources available to it.

3. The Christian Message—the Way Forward:

As much as the NRC set the ball rolling for the process of reconciliation with its conclusions and recommendations, I would like to insist that this process truly begins from the heart of the individual and then flows to the community of which the individual is a part. Hayner makes a distinction between individual reconciliation and national or political reconciliation.

According to Hayner:

The strength of a truth commission process is in advancing reconciliation on a national or political level. By speaking openly and publicly about past silenced or highly conflictive events and by allowing an independent commission to clear up high-profile cases, a commission can ease some of the strains that may otherwise be present in national legislative or other political bodies...on an individual level, however, reconciliation is much more complex, and much more difficult to achieve by means of a national commission. There certainly are examples of truth commission processes leading directly to healing and forgiveness for some individuals, but knowing the global truth or even knowing the specific truth about one's own case will not necessarily lead to a victim's reconciliation with his or her perpetrators. Forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation are deeply personal processes, and each person's needs and reactions to peacemaking and truth-telling may be different.²⁵⁵

My intention in the next few pages is to strengthen Ghanaians who have forgiven their perpetrators, so they may never look back and regret having chosen to forgive; indeed, they can take pride in their actions, knowing well that offering forgiveness is the better choice and leads to the greater good for all, including themselves. Drawing from the conclusions of my exegesis in the previous chapter as a foundation, I will begin by offering a few points on the importance

²⁵⁵ Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing*, 155.

of forgiveness as the beginning of a long road toward complete healing.

That religion plays a very important role in Ghanaian Society is a fact that I have previously acknowledged. No wonder that the NRC even though a secular organization, saw it wise to include a leading Christian and Muslim cleric as members of the commission. The previous chapter detailed how sin creates division, and how the Christian view of reconciliation brings this division to an end. In a religious context like Ghana's, the popular adage "to err is human and to forgive is divine" speaks to a lot of people. This is evident in the statements made by witnesses, as we will see below taken from the NRC hearings.

3.1: What Undergirded Ghanaians' Willingness and Ability to Forgive?

As we saw in chapter one, at the hearings there were a number of instances in which victims offered to forgive their perpetrator and some perpetrators of abuse even gave either general or particular apologies. Some even went ahead to make pledges to help their victims alleviate their pain. I will be making references to the examples of testimony taken from section 1.6.4 of this paper to buttress my claim in the next four paragraphs.

Mr. Adjaye, giving testimony from the era of the first republic and its *coup*, said, "forgiveness is the law of love. I want to forgive all those who have a hand in my mistreatment."²⁵⁶

Mr. Badasu giving testimony from the era of the second republic and its *coup*, narrated how the shock of his arrest killed his mother and how his father later died after going on a hunger strike in protest. As if that were not enough, his family accused him of causing his parents' deaths and had not forgiven him since then. Nevertheless, Mr. Badasu has forgiven all those who perpetrated this crime against him. He has also appealed to the commission to

²⁵⁶ Asmah and Mbakwe "Ghana," 26.

recommend his enrollment into the Ghana Police Central Band where he can develop his musical talent and sing to the praise of God.²⁵⁷

Mr. Djan, giving testimony from the era of the third republic and its coup, apologized to the victims of the brutalities of that regime in the following words, “ I feel very awful and sorry about what happened. We unreservedly apologize for the suffering of the people.” He said the group was seeking to come into contact with the victims to offer their apologies.²⁵⁸

Ex-Corporal Adabuga also from the same era said “I want to express my sincere regrets for all that I did to bring Ghana to its knees under the misguided leadership of Rawlings. I am truly sorry and I, from the bottom of my heart, apologize to all the people of Ghana, particularly those I offended in those sad days in our country. In the name of the Almighty God I humbly ask for forgiveness.” Adabuga said he killed twelve civilians on the orders of Rawlings. He said he would contribute to any endowment fund for the people he had killed and the families he had hurt.²⁵⁹ Still from the same era, Sergeant Apoera came forward as a respondent and remorsefully regretted his actions.²⁶⁰

These are just a few examples of the many which I cannot list in their totality. Adabuga and Badasu mentioned “God” in their statements while Adjaye mentioned “the law of love.” Their recognition that God, out of love, allowed God’s Son to come and die on the cross to save them cannot be taken away from them.

These statements remind me of the conclusions Paul drew from his Second Letter to the Corinthians and his Letter to the Ephesians in chapter two above. In the first place, the road to reconciliation begins with the victims coming forward and taking the initiative to tell their

²⁵⁷ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²⁵⁸ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²⁵⁹ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

²⁶⁰ Mensah, *Reconciliation, how did it go?*

stories. Paul teaches that the Christian understanding of reconciliation begins with God who out of his generosity and unconditional love (though the victim), takes the initiative to reconcile. God first recognizes what has created enmity (sin), and works in order to restore the former relationship and bring about peace. In a similar way, the NRC was helped by the victims' initiative to come forward out of love even though they knew very well that no matter what NRC offered, it would not undo the pain they suffered in the past. Nevertheless they sought what leads to peace, namely forgiveness and reconciliation.

This peace that they seek is the peace that Paul reminds the Ephesians that Christ brought by his blood on the cross. God out of love made this ultimate sacrifice of his only Son to bring about this peace. Paul's audience understood the image of crucifixion as Paul's provides them with an image of God who watches his Son suffer, and of the Son who not only dies, but dies in an embarrassing and ruthless way. This image enables the victims to link up their sufferings to that of Christ's cross which is a symbol of embarrassment, of deprivation of dignity, of suffering and shame. Despite the shame of the cross, Christ the victim saw it as a necessary way of deal with human sin.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission rightly put it, "the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and haunting us unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately. Unless we look the beast in the eye we find it has an uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage."²⁶¹ As much as we look back to reencounter these painful moments it is important to accept the fact that "however diabolical the act, it did not turn the perpetrator into a demon" Therefore, we need to "distinguish between the deed and the perpetrator, between the sinner and the sin, to hate and condemn the sin while being filled with compassion for the

²⁶¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 28.

sinner.”²⁶²

Civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., supports this assessment when he wrote, “We must recognize that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbor, the thing that hurts, never quite expresses all that he is. An element of goodness may be found even in our worst enemy. Each of us is something of a schizophrenic personality, tragically divided against ourselves.”²⁶³ It is important that we see this process of reconciliation as human in the sense that, as human beings ourselves, we are both capable of doing good and doing evil.

One moment in Ghana’s history that I would like to highlight here is the time after the first Rawlings *coup* in 1979. Students and workers and others from all walks of life tired of the economic hardships at the time, supported the *coup* leaders even to the extent of asking for more executions even after those of three former heads of state and other military officers. It was only years later that the abuses that took place connected to this event were unearthed. These abuses came to light in the testimonies of witnesses at the NRC hearings. As Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu puts it, “ the voices that were raised against the ‘revolutionary methods’ of which we now have cause to be ashamed were very few indeed. Therefore, the whole society needs to admit some responsibility, forgive itself and receive healing from the trauma of the events of those days.”²⁶⁴

It is important that victims understand the greater good that their forgiveness brings about and how such forgiveness is an indispensable step in the reconciliation process. Paul makes us understand that this is the task entrusted to a forgiven humanity that has received reconciliation through God’s own initiative and sacrifice. Receiving this gift leads to a life in Christ. Using himself as an example, Paul speaks about his life in Christ no longer regarding anyone according

²⁶² Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 83.

²⁶³ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 51.

²⁶⁴ Henrietta J. A. Y. Mensa-Bonsu, “The National Reconciliation Process: The Role of Religious Bodies,” *Talks and Address Delivered at the 19th Biennial Congress of the Ghana National Union of Diocesan Priests’ Association* (Wa, Ghana: NUGDPA, 2003), 41.

to the flesh. Paul now looked at others as brothers and sisters for whom Christ also died. God inspired him to look beyond people's sin and, by so doing, become a new creation. This is how it should be for all Christians. By virtue of the newness that has taken place through reconciliation, the believer is called to become an ambassador of reconciliation just like Paul. An ambassador must do the work that has been assigned to him or her. The work in this case is now the will of the sender, and the ambassador must act *agere contra* (against the natural instinct of seeking revenge in this case) in order to accomplish the mission. Incarnated in a sinful world, Christ brought about reconciliation by living a life that led to the pain and the sacrifice of shedding his blood on the cross. In a similar way, the believer should be made aware of the sacrifice that this task of reconciliation often involves.

The pain of the past must be dealt with in a humane manner by realizing that “ultimately no one is irredeemable and devoid of hope cause devoid of all hope... God does not give up on anyone, for God loved us from all eternity, God loves us now and God will always love us, all of us good and bad, forever and ever.”²⁶⁵

After telling the Ephesians about what Christ has done in their lives, Paul sends them a list of observances to help sustain their life together in Christ. Gentiles and Jews who were once enemies have been brought together and must live in peace and harmony with one another. This called for both Jews and Gentiles not to regard each other according to the flesh in order to overcome the sin that brought enmity between them. Along the same lines, both victims and perpetrators must be involved to effect true reconciliation and healing. Christ broke down the walls that divided peoples and now invites both Jews and Gentiles—that is, former enemies in all times and places—to shake hands and embrace each other.

Tutu sums up how one should treat the perpetrators:

²⁶⁵ Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 85.

The point is that if perpetrators were to be despaired of as monsters and demons, then we were thereby letting accountability go out the window because we were then declaring that they were not moral agents to be held responsible for the deeds they had committed. Much more importantly, it meant that we abandoned all hope of their being able to change for the better.²⁶⁶

It is indispensable that the perpetrator be given the opportunity to be part of the healing process. By this the perpetrator is enabled “to contribute towards building up new relationships in society that express an awareness of the seriousness of the crime that has been committed.”²⁶⁷ The road may be difficult for the perpetrator in a situation where the victim after forgiving is unwilling or finds it difficult to reconcile. There is a distinction between these two steps. The victim may not be ready to renew the relationship with the perpetrator. The victim may need some time.

However, the victim showing love by drawing the perpetrator closer to himself or herself with time, can drive this process of involvement of the perpetrator in the reconciliation process. Paul uses the images of being citizens of the kingdom, members of the household of God and the building with Christ as the cornerstone to show a gradually increasing intensity of love and togetherness that now exist between formerly divided peoples. It is as if Paul wants to say that this increasing love that brings people closer together takes time to achieve.

King argues that we cannot forgive and then say we do not want to have anything to do with the perpetrator.²⁶⁸ He conceptualizes the Greek word *agape* which is rooted in the Christian tradition and defines it as “love that seeks nothing in return... And when you rise to love on this level, you begin to love men, not because they are likeable, but because God loves them. You look at every man, and you love him because you know God loves him. And he might be the

²⁶⁶ Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 83.

²⁶⁷ Jochen Motte and Thomas Sandner, eds., *Justice and Reconciliation* (Wuppertal: Foedus-Verl, 2000), 33.

²⁶⁸ King, *Strength to Love*, 52.

worst person you've ever seen."²⁶⁹

Along the same lines of thought, Tutu uses the African *Weltanschauung* word “*ubuntu*” which is to say “ ‘my humanity is caught up to yours’ and we belong to in a bundle of life.”²⁷⁰ Thus “a person is a person through other persons.”²⁷¹ In other words, a person always belongs to his or her whole community and a person “is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed or treated as if they were less than who they are.”²⁷²

Christ’s cross is not only a symbol of shame but also a symbol of victory over death, over the humiliation (the injustice), the deprivation of dignity, of the suffering and shame. Jesus’ resurrection brought this victory over evil to humanity. Believers who suffered violence and the nation as whole should be strengthened by the words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. 4:7-10:

7 But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. (NRSV)

The message of the cross is the hope of victory for victims. It tells them that their wounds from the abuses they suffered last but only for a time. Through healing and reconciliation they will rise-up again, be healed, and be even stronger than before.

Finally, on a general note, it is important that the nation not forget about God in its institutions and its training of future leaders. With a strong Christian discipline of love and respect for the other instilled in the youth and in all institutions, we can struggle against vices

²⁶⁹ King, *Strength to Love*, 52.

²⁷⁰ Tutu, (2000), *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

²⁷¹ Tutu, (2000), *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

²⁷² Tutu, (2000), *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31.

like hatred, impunity, selfishness, and violence that destroy not only victims but also perpetrator and thus the whole nation. They can be replaced with mercy and compassion.

The words of Ghana's first President, Nkrumah, should lead the nation "forward ever, backward never," and should inspire all to move on after taking account of the past. Indeed, the nation stood still to take account of the past in order to make sure that the wrongful use of authority and impunity that engulfed the periods after independence and brought suffering to fellow citizens, do not repeat themselves. The NRC set the ball rolling for reconciliation, but for it to be achieved all hands need to be on deck—the follow-up work and the general contribution from various sectors of the Ghanaian society must be felt. And the Christian message of forgiveness and reconciliation can play a significant part in "forward ever."

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