Stellenbosch Theological Journal 2016, Vol 2, No 2, 621–644
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2016.v2n2.a28
Online ISSN 2413-9467 | Print ISSN 2413-9459

Conflicting models for mission and reconciliation: Future perspectives

Verster, P
University of the Free State
versterp@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

The debate between proponents of the ecumenical movement on the one hand and the evangelical movements on the other, often led to different models of reconciliation. On the one hand, social upliftment was regarded as essential in any view on reconciliation. Without a deeply entrenched "social gospel" no reconciliation was deemed possible. Evangelicals, on the other hand, were of the opinion that no reconciliation is possible without conversion and acceptance of the atonement in Christ. This debate has since waned, because both groups have in some instances accepted views from the other side, as stated by David Bosch. However, differences remain in the models for reconciliation, even in the South African church communities. Emphases on social justice and restitution viewed from a specific theological point are often contrary to the view that true reconciliation is only possible if the church proclaims conversion to God and the acceptance of the atonement in Jesus, who is the only Saviour. Evaluating the essence of reconciliation, as put forward by Paul in the Letter to the Romans, might give an acceptable view for future reconciliation.

Key words

Evangelicals; ecumenicals; conversion; social justice; atonement in Romans

1. Introduction

A lively debate between the proponents of the ecumenical and evangelical movements on the essence of reconciliation had been present in the previous century. Literature presents the discussion of the essential aspects of the sola scriptura, especially regarding the atonement and reconciliation (Bailyes 1996:485ff, Bosch 1988:458ff, Berkhof 1976:23-26, Hunt 2011:81-84, George 2006:15-23, Stott and Wright 2015:16-22).

Different models of reconciliation were presented. Although this debate has waned, many different models still exist and in church communities this often leads to radical discussions (Bosch 1988:458 ff., Stott and Wright 2015:16-22). Is there a way out of this impasse? Is it possible to find an acceptable view on reconciliation? Can an analysis of Paul's letter to the Romans help in this regard?

2. The debate on models of reconciliation

The debate between the proponents of the models of the ecumenical movement and the evangelical movement led to radical different views. Bailyes (1996:485-503) explains in detail that the evangelical movement emphasised conversion as essential for reconciliation, while the ecumenical movement rather emphasised social upliftment as essential for reconciliation: "Conversion, in ecumenical understanding, was in danger of becoming a largely redundant word. The goal of mission is to co-operate with God in the creation of a more humane world (1996:489)." It is necessary to revisit these models to establish the implications for mission.

3. Reconciliation as social justice

Justice for the poor

Firstly we discuss the model of the ecumenical movement. Bailyes (1996:489) writes that "In place of conversion, ecumenical energies were largely concerned with liberation from socio-economic oppression on the one hand and dialogue with "Living Faiths and Ideologies" on the other." The emphasis was on social justice, and the essence of Christ's life and work was seen in the context of social justice. Christ came to this world to show the way to social justice. What He did was important to all people, but especially to the oppressed and poor. Jesus came to bring about a total new dispensation, namely the abolition of poverty, helping the poor, and changing the circumstances of the poor. Social justice means that Jesus set himself against the injustice in this world and that He gives the example of the new world and a new way of living with Him in a new relation. Jesus made it possible to follow Him in this new relation. This, however, means that there should be a radical stance against injustice. Sometimes, in this

world, this stance against injustice implies that people are persecuted for setting themselves against the injustice in the world.

Justice in the crucifixion

In this regard it is suggested that Jesus was also crucified because He set Himself against the injustice in the world and against unjust rulers of this world. Contrary to classical theologians, Weaver (2001:45) views the crucifixion as the murder of Christ, because He was the One for justice who had to destroy the injustice in the world in order to bring about a new dispensation of justice. The cross then does not infer that it took away God's wrath against the sinner, but that it is rather a protest against the injustice in the world. Jesus set himself against the injustice. That is why He was murdered. In His death He sets the example of how to deal with injustice, even though it may mean that you give your life in the process. Although Moltmann (1974) regards the cross as essential in the theological reflection of God's engagement of the Son, he also regards the essence of the crucifixion as the radical challenge to all worldly powers.

> "In that case, the glory of God does not shine on the crowns of the mighty, but on the face of the crucified Christ. The authority of God is then no longer represented directly by those in high positions, the powerful and the rich, but by the outcast Son of Man, who died between two wretches. The rule and the kingdom of God are no longer reflected in political rule and world kingdoms, but in the service of Christ, who humiliated himself to the point of death on the cross."

Moltmann (2012) also defines the implications of hope and the crucified God to include the new possibilities of the cross for social justice. The implication is that he foresaw that the cross opened up a new thrust for social justice.

Social Gospel

The Social Gospel was regarded as the way in which new relations and new societies could be established in this world. The way in which Jesus dealt with the problems of the world was that He wanted people to live harmoniously in a new world. This new world could only be realised by bringing about justice in the world of injustice. At the World Council of Churches in

Uppsala in 1968 (See Sjollema 1994:9) programmes were initiated against certain aspects of injustice, but also to combat racism. Funds were made available to organisations using violence to bring about change.

Liberation theology

In South America the liberation theology movement regarded Jesus as the One that brings about liberation and that that is the way of interpreting reconciliation and atonement. People such as Gutierrez and Sobrino explained that Jesus was on the side of the poor to bring about justice in the world.

Gutierrez (1996:146) writes:

> "We should prefer them (the poor PV) not because they are good (if they are, fine!) but because first of all God is good and prefers the forgotten, the oppressed, the poor, the abandoned. The ultimate and final reason for the "preference" lies in the God of our faith."

He is of the opinion that we should have the same preference exactly because we believe in God. Therefore there is no Christian life without solidarity with the poor.

Sobrino (1978:393) brings the revelation of God in Christ in relation with the fullness of humanity:

> "In the concrete, then, this faith is jeopardized by all the crosses in history that seem to manifest the silence of God. It is constantly confronted with the groaning of history: of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt, of Jesus dying on the cross, of all creation trying to come to birth and awaiting its liberation. Faith in God goes far beyond conventional theism and atheism. It takes its stand where things are happening, where the groaning of history can be heard and touched."

This meant that you have to set yourself against the rich and the oppressors of this world to bring about total change. This even meant that you could resort to violence in some instances to set yourself against the injustices in the world. Structural injustice and structural sin were regarded to be just as dangerous as any personal sin. Total renewal in justice is needed. John de Gruchy (1986:210-212) discusses the difficult relation of liberation theology

and ideology and explains how the sometimes uncritical link to Marxism is accepted for the sake of rejection of another ideology. He (2014:94) however also explains that the church in the new South Africa should be a church of critical solidarity with the government and that it should always take sides with all those who remain oppressed. Ideology criticism remains a serious issue in dealing with challenges of justice and reconciliation.

Mission and justice

Emeritus Archbishop Tutu presents a view on mission from this perspective. Mission, according to him, is not trying to convince adherents of other religions to become Christian (Tutu 2011:12 ff.). It is not a question of changing a person's faith because you fear that that person will end up in hell. Christ is not regarded as a substitute for the sinner in the sense that He has to take way God's wrath on the cross. The cross is God's protest against injustice in the world. Mission has to do with protest against injustice. Wherever people of all different beliefs take up the struggle against injustice, especially for the sake of the poor, mission is being done. Mission in this sense is thus a complete view of all religions against injustice. Tutu (2011:56) writes: "God has no enemies, ultimately for all, all–the atheist, the sinner, every one of those whom we have tended in our respectabilities to push outside–are God's children." And he explains (2011:19): "We do our religions scant justice, we put our religions into disrepute, if we do not stand up for the truth, if we do not stand up for justice, if we are not the voice of the voiceless ones, if we are not those who stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves."

Tutu (1983:110) also writes: "To love God involves to love one's neighbour. They go together or both are false. It must incarnate the love and compassion and justice and reconciliation of Christ. It (the church) must work ceaselessly for justice for only thus can it work for reconciliation."

In this regard the Kairos document (1987) is also significant. It was regarded as a "Christian, biblical and theological" comment on the crisis facing the political dispensation in South Africa at that time. Firstly, the crisis in South Africa was explained. It not only included severe criticism of the proponents of the so-called state theology (Status quo at that time) and of church theology, whose proponents were against the situation at the time, but also called for non-violence and reconciliation. The Kairos document

called for prophetic theology which is the way in which they wanted to "do theology" in a revolutionary situation. Explaining that God sides with the poor, they called for action which clearly did not exclude contra violence. Criticism from Beyerhaus (1987:20-23) was levelled against the document for attacking previously held biblical views which he sees as a perversion of the Gospel. Concerning the Belhar confession, it is also proclaimed that God stands with the poor and outcast. Naudé (2010:199) summarises this view well: "Thus a truly Christian (Christelike) church will in effect be a healing and embracing community, a home for AIDS orphans, a refuge for the socially outcast, and a source of hope for a society in the grip of death."

4. Reconciliation as conversion and acceptance of the atonement

Personal conversion

The Evangelical movement emphasised that personal conversion and reconciliation with God is all important. This was regarded as the way in which Christ brought about reconciliation in the world. Christ came to this world so that He could bridge the gap between God and humans by bringing about radical reconciliation. This meant that men and women, as sinners, had to confess their sin, change their ways, and believe in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. Atonement was the way in which Jesus brought about reconciliation with God. In the atonement of Christ on the cross, people were brought into a new relation with the living God. They had to change their ways and find solace in the fact that Christ had died for them, and brought about reconciliation. It is necessary to experience Christ personally (Stott 1977:18). Bailyes (1996: 488) explains this view:

> "Evangelicals lay great stress upon conversion, being "born again". More often than not, it is defined in strongly individualistic terms, and is often described as a crisis experience in line with the historical precedents of the evangelical awakenings and of revivalism. Sin (again, expounded in personal rather than structural terms) is to be repented of, and a new way of life embraced, and personal holiness pursued (defined as some kind of esoteric separation from the world)."

To be saved is to receive eternal life. Eternal life is regarded as the result of salvation in Christ, which God brings about. Billy Graham (1965:113-124) especially, states clearly that salvation in Christ through His substitutionary death is received when the sinner is converted and receives the rebirth through the Holy Spirit. This message must be proclaimed all over the world. There must be a witness to the reconciliation with God which Jesus Christ achieved for the sinner.

Evangelicals differ on the concept of hell for those who do not receive the salvation in Christ, but many regard the concept of eternal damnation as biblical (Sanders 2013: 267-281). Sin is thoroughly destructive and only through Christ is it possible to be saved. Sanders (2013:270-271), however, explains that there are also opinions among evangelicals such as that of Stott who propagates that annihilation for the unsaved is biblical. Presently, evangelicals such as Robb Bell are of the opinion that the salvation of Christ is far more universal than previously understood by evangelicals (Sanders 2013:279-280). Evangelicals, however, often regard the views of Bell as unacceptable and even as heresy.

Reconciliation with God makes it possible to live in a new relation with Him and also with fellow humans. Very important was that the atonement on the cross meant that Christ died for sinners and that in dying for sinners He brought about the new relations. Christ had to die because God ordained it, according to this view. Christ was ordained by God to die on the cross, because He brought about the new relation with God in the sense that He yielded Himself as the saviour of humankind. The personal relation with Christ is all important. This meant that the Church is the community of believers, of those who are saved, and have a new relation with God (Tennent 2010:400ff).

5. Evaluation of models

The difference between these two views on reconciliation, atonement and justice led to quite lively debates in the past. The Dutch Reformed Church even severed ties with the WCC, because the Council regarded their views as unacceptable. According to the ecumenical movement the evangelicals had little idea of the social importance of the Gospel, and according to the evangelicals the ecumenical movement emphasised social issues and in

that sense missed the essence of the Bible, namely that Jesus Christ yielded Himself to save sinners. David Bosch (1991:393-400) tries to bridge the two views on reconciliation and atonement. He tries to show that it is possible to be a good ecumenical person accepting social justice, but also to accept that Jesus had died for sinners so that they could be reconciled with Him. Bosch also explains that it is possible to be an evangelical, emphasising the radical atonement and reconciliation in Jesus Christ, but also the possibility of taking cognisance of the serious situation of people in the world and reaching out to them. Bosch (1988: 470) explained in 1988 already how many proponents of the evangelical movement would positively engage the ecumenical movement and vice versa.

Social justice should also be seen as very important for the evangelicals. Tennent (2010: 391-392) explains that evangelicals always regarded social action as very important.

The Lausanne Covenant (https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant) article 5 was dedicated to social action. The relationship between evangelism and social action is thus very important to evangelicals. The Lausanne Covenant also emphasises that reconciliation means that people are saved by Christ alone, but that it also means that you have to reach out to people in need to help them in their situation and reconcile them with one another. In the occasional papers on reconciliation emphasis on Christ's redemption and His salvation is regarded as essential, but reference is also made to the implications for e.g. the Dalit oppression (Claydon 2005: 496-ff). Stott and Wright (2015:23) also emphasise the need to link evangelism and social action. Some ecumenicals, although not all, also accept personal conversion and reconciliation. Although the debate between the evangelicals and ecumenicals has waned, the radical salvation in Jesus Christ and the fact that He yielded Himself so that humans can be saved, is still emphasised on the one hand, while on the other hand, the emphasis on reconciliation is only possible if Jesus Christ is regarded as the One who shows the way in which social regeneration can take place.

Bosch (1991:398-400) explains that salvation has to do with all aspects of Christ's work. The *totus Christus* means that the central issue in salvation is the holistic approach. Bosch (1991:400) writes:

> "Those who know that God will one day wipe away all tears will not accept with resignation the tears of those who suffer and are oppressed *now*. Anyone who knows that one day there will be no more disease can and must actively anticipate the conquest of disease in individuals and society *now*. And anyone who believes that the enemy of God and humans will be vanquished will already oppose him *now* in his machinations in family and society, for all of this has to do with *salvation*."

Bosch's (1991:511ff.) solution is six salvific events, namely incarnation, cross, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost and Parousia. Bosch always tried to keep the holistic elements in relation with each other.

Skreslet (2012:70-72) takes his cue from Bosch in developing answers to the different views on salvation. He is of the opinion that the essence of salvation is in reconciliation. Referring to Schreiter (1992:18-25,65) he explains: "Reconciliation requires a truthful accounting of the past, in order to lay bare the need for genuine repentance. Here salvation is a matter of repair, an intention to rebuild or restore what power and coercive force have battered and damaged"

Bevans and Schroeder (2004:324) emphasise that the proclamation of the name of Jesus is essential and that salvation in Him is undisputable. Reconciliation in Him is the essence of salvation. They explain, however, that even the Lausanne Covenant sees evangelism and social responsibilities as essential Christian elements. They explain that evangelicals and Roman Catholics differ on the salvation, because evangelicals regard those who do not believe and repent of their sin in Christ as lost, while the Roman Catholics are of the opinion that the possibility of righteousness exist in humans of different beliefs and take part in the paschal mystery (2004:326).

Wright (2006:340) sees the essential aspect of the relation with God in the covenant. The new relation with God is possible in the covenantal renewal in all aspects of God's love. This is possible because God makes Himself known in Israel and in Jesus Christ. God also chooses His people and they should live in the new covenantal relation with Him. The span of God's missional covenant includes the redemption and restoration. He explains how the temple includes all for salvation:

> "And ultimately, of course, the temple of God will encompass not only his whole people redeemed from every tribe, nation, people and language but the whole cosmos, within which we will serve him as kings and priests. That is to say, humanity redeemed through Christ and modelled on Christ's perfect humanity will be restored to our proper and intended relationship with creation (2006:340)"

It is, however, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (2013:338) who established that reconciliation and salvation has to do with aspects of violence, but then in the sense of God's salvific event. One cannot set God's redemption of sinners against God's renewal of society. The cross cannot be regarded as either a political execution or a redemptive divine act. Both should be taken into consideration. Notions of sacrifice, substitution and expiation should however still be taken into consideration although not regarded as the pacification of a violent God (2013:344):

> "The whole history of Jesus, including the subsequent pouring out of the Spirit on the new community sent out to the world, belongs to atonement with a promise of a holistic offer of salvation that encompasses all aspects of human, social, and cosmic life. Only a proper Trinitarian account would insure such a comprehensive exposition."

6. The South African situation

In South Africa there are still those who vigorously debate the issue of social justice. The debate on the Belhar confession in the family of Dutch Reformed churches is a sign of the differences between people on the way in which reconciliation is accepted (See Naudé (2010:135-142). Social justice in the community in a revolutionary sense is sometimes frowned upon. To call for justice is also necessary. How can the church community deal with these challenges? Conversions and acceptance of atonement are still emphasised by many churches.

The serious question on what social justice in South Africa entails should be asked. How does this influence the community? The question of reconciliation and social justice are essential in a discussion on the way forward for South Africa. New models are often being suggested to come

to a new understanding of how one should see the differences in the new South Africa.

7. Bosch on the acceptance of the views of others

David Bosch, (see Kritzinger & Saayman 2011:185 ff) who died before the advent of the new South Africa, explains that the church was an alternative community that could help the society in general to see how to live with God in different circumstances. He suggests that a new community was possible–a community where it was possible to serve God and to be in a radical relation with God. According to him it was possible to explain the possibility of serving God and be true to the essence of the Gospel. He explains that many different models of salvation should also be discussed. Therefore, he emphasises that salvation was not only bringing a person to heaven, but that the atonement of Christ on the cross meant that people are saved to do justice. Atonement and Christ's death on the cross have meaning for the person in this life. A new relation with God is possible, but this leads to a new humanity because Christ makes it possible. He opens up new ways in which one can receive the radical salvation in Christ; all of humanity can experience this salvation. Different aspects of life can be regenerated. All the different aspect of life, such as the social and political life, can be regenerated by God and it can be made into a new situation where the atonement of Christ brings about new relations and different possibilities.

8. Reconciliation and present day differences

In the South African context there are, however, those who explain that the essence of the atonement remains the salvation in Christ. What He did on the cross was to save people. This essence of the atonement must also be recognised in the way in which it is explained in the community and the way in which the community understands it. This means that the atonement on the cross influences the personal life of the individual and can save the individual, although it also has implications for the church as the saved community, as the elect of Christ being saved in that sense.

The question now is whether the letter of Paul to the Romans can help one understand the different aspects of atonement and reconciliation better.

The letter of Paul to the Romans is a very important letter, because of its influence on the church community. Luther, after reading the letter to the Romans anew, started the reformation (See Betuel 2003:7-8). Barth started a total new view of theology (See Webster 2000:28-29).

Romans starts with the essence of Paul's apostleship. He is an Apostle set apart to proclaim Christ as the Lord. Through Him he received the grace and the apostleship to proclaim Christ as Lord.

Dunn (1998b:xvi-xvii) explains this as follows:

> "To rediscover Romans as a statement sketched out on the interface between diverse traditions and visions and cultures is to liberate it to speak with fresh force to those concerned at the interface between Christianity and modern cultures, at the interface not least between Judaism and Christianity. To appreciate something of its power as word of God to the Christians in first-century Rome may be a vital first step to hearing it as God's word to equivalent situations today."

9. The essence of reconciliation in the letter to the Romans

In any discussion of reconciliation the views of Paul are highly important. Pauline studies received much attention recently. Not only does the so-called new perspective challenge previous views on Paul and reconciliation, but the whole concept of atonement is evaluated differently. Kim (2002) still essentially holds to Luther's views and is of the opinion that the experience on the road to Damascus radically influenced Paul's theology, while Sanders (1977:447), Dunn (1998a:349ff) and even Wright (2013:644ff), challenge these views and explain that Paul's theology was influenced comprehensively by his Jewish background. Reading Paul's letter closely, one must largely agree that Paul had a definite and radical engagement with Christ on the road to Damascus, but that his theology was developed in relation with Jewish thought, which has implications for his views on reconciliation. This perspective will be explained by an exegetical overview of certain passages in Romans.

The first essential aspect of the letter to Romans is the reference to the wrath of God. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the sin of human beings and the radical explanation of these sins at the start of Romans

1 verse 18 explains how deep humankind has fallen and how radical the schism is between God and humans. I do not think that one can explain the essence of all different personal sins from Romans 1, but it is essentially explained that humankind has rejected God and God's righteous judgment is well deserved.

Romans 1:18-20

> [18]The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, [19]since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. [20]For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (NIV)

Although Dunn (1998: xvi) suggests a new understanding of Paul, much of his explanation of Romans 1:18-20 can still be accepted. He shows that the ὀργὴ θεοῦ was a well-known concept in the ancient world. It had to do with the wrath of God against human impiety or transgression of commandments. It can also be regarded as an explanation of communal catastrophes or unanticipated sickness or death. He refers to the fact that Paul takes up the language of the wrath of God to explain the effect of human unrighteousness in the world. Dunn (1998:xvii) is of the opinion that the wrath of God is not something He is responsible for or an attitude, but something God *does*.

> "Here he expounds the concept in highly moral terms (vv 19-32), but these verses contain the beginning of an answer which he elaborates later in terms of the individual (chaps. 6–8) and of humankind as a whole, Jew and Gentile (chaps. 9–11). In brief, his resolution is that the effect of divine wrath upon man is to show that man who rebels against his relation of creaturely dependence on God (which is what faith is) becomes subject to degenerative processes."

It is necessary to understand that the reference to the wrath of God is all encompassing and total. It would be wrong to highlight a certain aspect without taking into consideration the general aspect of evil in the world. The relation with God is all important. The problem of evil has to do with the lack of acknowledging God. In the place of God are the idols–by the

rejection of God and the rejection of the living relation with Him, the wrath of God is made known. It is essential to take this into consideration when discussing the aspect of reconciliation and justice.

Harrison (1976:22) explains the implications:

> "Furthermore, since there is a wrath to come that will inevitably involve God, there is no reason why he should not involve himself in manifesting his wrath in the present. Human objection to the idea of the wrath of God is often moulded, sometimes unconsciously, by human experience of anger as passion or desire for revenge. But this is only a human display of wrath, and one that is corrupted. God's wrath is not temperamental (cf. 13:4, 5, where its judicial character is evident)."

Evaluating the views on Romans 1:18ff, it is essential to take into account that God should not be equated to humans. God is radically different from us. In this regard it is also appropriate to refer to Barth (1972:42-43) who, in his dialectical approach, explains that the *no* of God follows when we do not love the judge, namely God. Unbelief in God is an exact rejection of the God of justice. It is the essence of our rejection of the salvation. It is therefore necessary to reconcile with God.

Secondly, it is very clear that new life is possible in Christ; that He is the one that makes it possible. Romans 3 verse 21 explains that righteousness from God has been made known, the righteousness of God is a total new relation of God to humankind in sin and we can now experience a new relation with God. It is possible because of the sacrifice of the atonement. Therefore, the atonement is also seen as a sacrifice and the implication of the atonement and sacrifice is explained. The atonement is then seen as the way in which humankind in total depravity is changed from people in need to people being saved by God through the blood of Christ. This atonement and this reconciliation are explained within the perimeters of faith. Therefore, the faith community is very important. Paul explains the fullness of the salvation in a nearly universalistic way, but it is clear that he steers clear from that in emphasising the need for faith.

Dunn (1998:176) refers to the act of God: "God made his righteousness visible in this act, and he brought his outreach for man's salvation to clear

expression at that time, in such a way that it remains clearly manifest and determinative for the "now."

Romans 3:21-26

> [21]But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22]This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, [23]for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25]God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. [26]He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

From the reality of sin, Paul explains that the righteousness is received in Christ. This comes only through faith. All have sinned indeed, but in Christ the wonder of righteousness is made possible. This righteousness is revealed in Christ. Therefore, Barth (1972:95) explains that we see the faithfulness of God present in His revelation. This revelation of the righteousness of God for the unrighteous brings the full redemption. Wright (2013:529) explains that the faithfulness of God is present in Jesus' faithfulness in the sense that He becomes the true representative of God. Israel failed to be the true faithful servants of God. Christ as the true Messiah is the true representative of God. He is also one with God in true Jewish monotheistic sense. God is rescuing Israel, humans and the world and this is possible in Christ. Much can be appreciated in this regard, but the essential aspect of Christ as the only true salvation for now and eternity does not receive enough attention.

Schlier (1979:103) explains that the righteousness of God is clear in the Gospel of Jesus Christ who changes everything by His salvation.

The atonement is, however, something quite radical. Humanity in its deepest need, the justice of God and the atonement of God who saved people through Christ in the atonement by the fact that He showed His love to people who hated Him and who were in sin. That is the love of God

and in Romans 5 that is explained thoroughly. Death came through Adam, but life came through Christ. This aspect of reconciliation and atonement explains that future life with God is possible in a new relation and in a new phase. This new relation with God touches all aspects of life, because it changes the struggling life of sin to a life with God, which is explained in Romans 5:6-11.

Romans 5:6-11

> [6]You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7]Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. [8]But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9]Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10]For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [11]Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

It is Christ that reveals the love of God in his atonement. Nygren (1975:199) explains this well: "In Christ, God's love has filled the cup to overflowing and been poured out on us. It has been poured forth from the hearth of God and sought its way to our hearths, true to the very nature of love."

NT Wright (2013:885ff.) engages this passage thoroughly. He sees it as the heart of Paul's theology. The argument is that Paul explains that hope is possible in the death of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This justification leads to salvation. Wright sees this salvation, however, not in the sense of the individual going to heaven, but as the regeneration of humanity by grace. The plight of the human race and the love of God is explained in the death of Christ by the obedience of the Messiah. The election, resurrection and restoration of the human race is possible and with the renewal of the covenant in the faithfulness of the Messiah. Although much can be appreciated from what Wright has written, it must be stated that the hope is essentially the new life in Christ which lasts until eternity. There is a cosmological aspect to the regeneration but in this passage Paul places hope

in the realm of the new life of the person who receives the reconciliation with God. This new life has implications for the present and the future.

Romans 6 verse 13 emphasises that the person of God is called, not to yield the body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but to offer themselves to God and to follow God. There is also the illustration of life through the spirit; that a new life and future glory in the creation is possible.

Romans 6:11-14

> [11]In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. [12]Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. [13]Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. [14]For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

The new life is possible in the dying with Christ. Only when the believer is in Christ is it possible to live the life of regeneration.

Dunn (1998:350-351) explains that for believers, however, there is a choice:

> "They can choose to put themselves at God's disposal as those alive from the dead, and their constituent parts as instruments or weapons of righteousness to God. The way to prevent sin's (re) asserting its control is to recall the epochal significance of Christ's righteous act, consciously to view each issue from the perspective of Christ's death and resurrection, to choose and act as though Christ's resurrection had already achieved its complete effect (to act as one would act in the presence of God), or at least as those through whom the risen life of Christ is already flowing."

That is the important aspect; this atonement and the reconciliation, mean that Christ atoned himself, yielded himself so that a new relation is possible. It also means that He brings about a total dispensation for the whole creation (Romans 8 verse 12 to 16. i.e.), but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Romans 8:14-21

> [14]For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.
> [15]The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live
> in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your
> adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." [16]The Spirit
> himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. [17]Now if
> we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with
> Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also
> share in his glory. [18]I consider that our present sufferings are not
> worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. [19]For
> the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be
> revealed. [20]For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its
> own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope [21]that
> the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and
> brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

The future glory is therefore possible as seen from verses 18 to 26 in which the new life is being explained. This implies that the reconciliation definitely also has to do with the future life with God. The suffering of this world will change into glory because God in Christ makes it possible. The full extent of the grace of God will only be experienced in the salvation in the future (Witherington 111 2004:225). This has to do with total regeneration and the resurrection of the body (Witherington 111 2004:225). In this regard it must be emphasised that the reconciliation is not only limited to this world. In Romans both this world and the future world is important.

Paul also explains that this atonement has implications for the Jews. All the Jews can come to God and be saved in Christ. That is only possible in Christ, because God makes it possible through the life of Christ and the radical reconciliation. Again the possibility of universalism is present, but it is also clear that it is only possible in Christ and that the conversion should be in Christ.

Romans 8:28-30

> [28]And we know that in all things God works for the good of those
> who love him, who[i] have been called according to his purpose.
> [29]For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to
> the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many

> brothers and sisters. [30]And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Finally, the reconciliation in Christ touches life in all its aspects, especially the political life. All relations are touched, e.g. in Romans 1–the life of a person in relation to the state and to others, and in Romans 13 from verse 8–the life of the relation between Gentiles and Jews, where the Gentiles can also hear the good news and the salvation.

Harrison (1976:137) explains:

> "It is probably significant that the name of Christ does not appear anywhere in the passage. The thought does not move in the sphere of redemption or the life of the church as such, but in the relation to the state that God in his wisdom has set up. While the Christian has his citizenship in heaven (Philippians 3:20), he is not on that account excused from responsibility to acknowledge the state as possessing authority from God to govern him. He holds a dual citizenship."

The letter of Paul to the Romans has a very important message of reconciliation which has implications for today. The future possibility is then that reconciliation in its totality can bring about new relations and new personal possibilities. New relations are possible in the way in which God makes it possible for people to have a relationship with one another and to experience these total new possibilities.

Romans 13:6-7

> [6]This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. [7]Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.

Dunn (1998b:769) explains:

> "A community which no longer identified itself in ethnic terms could therefore no longer claim the political privileges accorded to ethnic minorities. Paul must have been very conscious that by redrawing the boundaries of the people of God in non-ethnic terms he was putting the *political* status of the new congregations at risk…. Consequently, any attempted overview of the group identity and of

> the social relationships of Christian congregations in the diaspora would have to address the issue of their political status and what that meant in the reality of daily existence—and particularly in Rome, the very seat of imperial government."

Reconciliation with God leads to wonder in His presence; the wonder of His salvation which has implications for all. This means that the message of reconciliation is universal in essence although it has to be accepted. The fullness of the reconciliation is clear for the whole community.

Rom 15:9-10

> 9"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." 10Again, it says, "Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people."

Essential elements in Romans are thus the change from God's wrath to His absolute overflowing love. This comes about by way of the redemption in Christ. It has, however, meaning for life in its totality. Life with God is also life in fullness. The here and now should be touched by God, but also eternity with Him because we cannot be separated from His love.

10. Conclusion

The ministry of reconciliation should be a ministry in brokenness. From Romans it is essential to emphasise God's bold love for us to be humble before Him but also bold in living with Christ. It is clear from Romans that humans are under the wrath of God. Only through the love of God in Christ can change come about. This change brings new hope in a deep and profound way. Real salvation is possible and a new life and future with God is present. For the debate between the proponents of the evangelical and the ecumenical movements this should mean that a return to the fullness of reconciliation with God is necessary and that the radical aspects of the atonement should be recognised, and even as important, that reconciliation with God means that hope is possible in this life in the light of Christ's death and resurrection. Tennent (2010:491) explains that the incarnation reverses the curse of death so that the sinner may become a new creation in Christ and that this new situation is possible in Him.

The conclusion is then the total holistic element of Christ's atonement. It touches all aspects of life. It has to do with the here and the now, but also with eternity. The implication is that the fullness of reconciliation should be proclaimed and lived.

For the church a call to radical allegiance to Christ in His atonement is necessary in future. Christ must be uplifted by all. Reconciliation with Christ also means reconciliation in the church. The church should become the community of the reconciliation in Christ. Ecumenicals and evangelicals should seek this new reconciliation by yielding to Christ as the One that brings it about. A new model for reconciliation should take both aspects into consideration, namely the atonement by Christ and the reconciliation of the community with God and one another because of this atonement. Romans helps us tremendously in this regard.

Bibliography

Barth, K. 1972. *The epistle to the Romans* (Translated by E.C. Hoskyns from the 6th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bailyes, A.J. 1996. Evangelical and ecumenical understandings of mission, *International Review of Mission,* 85(339): 485-503, Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO*host.* [2016, October 26].

Berkhof, H. 1976. Evangelicals and the World Council of Churches, *Reformed Journal,* 26(7): 23-26. Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost [2016, October 26].

Betuel, A. 2003. Luther's life. (Translated by K. Gustavs) In D.K. McKim, *The Cambridge companion to Martin Luther.* Cambridge: Cambridge Press. 3-19

Beyerhaus, P. 1987, *The Kairos document: challenge or danger to the church?* Cape Town: Gospel Defence League.

Bevans, S.B. & Schroeder, R.P. 2006. *Constants in context: a theology of mission for today.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Bible, NIV.

Bosch, DJ. 1988. "Ecumenicals" and "Evangelicals": a growing relationship?", *The Ecumenical Review,* 40(3-4): 458-472. Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO*host,* [2016, October 26].

Bosch, D.J. 1991. *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Bosch, D.J. 1979. *A spirituality of the road.* Scottdale, PA: Harald Press. [Institute of Mennonite Studies, Missionary Studies No.6.]

Claydon, D. (ed.). 2005. A new vision, a new hearth, a renewed call. (Volume 2.) Lausanne occasional papers from the 2004 Forum for World Evangelisation hosted by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 – October 5, 2004. Pasadena, CA: William Carey.

De Gruchy, J. 1986. *The church struggle in South Africa.* Grand Rapids. MI.: Eerdmans.

De Gruchy, J. 2014. *A theological odyssey: my life in writing.* Stellenbosch: Sun Press. [Volume VII in the Beyers Naudé Centre series on public theology].

Dunn, J.D.G. 1998a. *The theology of Paul the apostle.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Dunn, J.D.G. (1998b). *Romans 1-8* (Vol. 38A, p. 176). Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated.

Dunn, J.D.G. (1998c). *Romans 9–16* (Vol. 38B, p. 769). Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated.

George, T. 2006. Evangelicals and others, *First Things,* 160:15-23. Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO*host.* [2016, October 26].

Graham, B. 1965. *World aflame.* New York: Doubleday.

Gutierrez, G. 1996. *Gustavo Gutierrez essential writings.* (Edited by James, B. Nickoloff) Minneapolis: Fortress. [The making of modern theology: Nineteenth and twentieth century texts].

Harrison, E.F. 1976. Romans. In F.E. Gaebelein (ed.). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians* (Vol. 10, p. 137). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Hunt, R.A. 2011. The history of the Lausanne movement, 1974-2010, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* 35(2): 81-84. Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost. [2016, October 26].

Kairos document. 1987. Challenge to the church: A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa. Braamfontein: Skotaville.

Kärkkäinen, V-M. 2013. *Christ and reconciliation.* Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans. [A constructive Christian theology for the pluralistic world. Vol. 1.]

Kim, S. 2002. *Paul and the new perspective: second thoughts on the origin of Paul's gospel.* Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans.

Kritzinger, J.N.J. & Saayman, W. 2011. *David J. Bosch: prophetic integrity, cruciform praxis.* Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.

The Lausanne covenant. [Online]. Available: https://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant. [Accessed November 1, 2016].

Moltmann, J. 1974. *The crucified God: the cross of Christ as the foundation and criticism of Christian theology.* (Translated by RA Wilson and J Bowden). London: SCM.

Moltmann, J. 2012. *Ethics of hope* (Translated by M. Kohl). Minneapolis: Fortress.

Naudé, P.J. 2010. *Neither calendar nor clock: perspectives on the Belhar confession.* Grand Rapids. MI.: Eerdmans.

Nygren, A. 1975. *Commentary on Romans.* Philadelphia: Fortress.

Sanders. E.P. 1977. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: a comparison of patterns of religion.* London: SCM.

Sanders, J. 2013. Raising hell about razing hell: evangelical debates on universal salvation, *Perspectives in Religious Studies,* 40(3): 267-281. Available ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCO*host.* [2016, October 26].

Schlier, H. 1979. *Der Römerbrief.* Freiburg: Herder. [Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament].

Schreiter, R.J. 1992. *Reconciliation: mission and ministry in a changing social order.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Sjollema, B. 1994. The initial challenges. In P. Webb (ed.). *A long struggle: the involvement of the World Council of Churches in South Africa*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Skreslet, S.H. 2012. *Comprehending mission: the question, methods, themes, problems, and prospects of missiology.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Sobrino, J. 1978. *Christology at the crossroads: A Latin American approach.* (Translated by J Drury). London: SCM.

Stott, J.R.W. 1977. *Motives and methods in evangelism*. London: Intervarsity.

Stott, J. & Wright, C. 2015. *Christian mission and the modern world* (Updated and expanded). Downers Grove, IL.: IVP.

Tennent, T.C. 2010. *Invitation to world missions: a Trinitarian missiology for the twenty-first century.* Grand Rapids, MI. : Kregel. [Invitation to theological studies series].

Tutu, D. 2011. *God is not a Christian: speaking truth in times of crises.* London: Rider.

Tutu, D. 1983. *Hope and suffering: sermons and speeches.* Johannesburg: Skotaville.

Webster, J. 2000. *Barth.* London: Continuum.

Witherington III, B. 2004. *Paul's letter to the Romans: A socio-rhetorical commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Wright, C.J.H. 2006. *The mission of God: unlocking the Bible's grant narrative.* Nottingham: InterVarsity.

Wright, N.T. 2013. *Paul and the faithfulness of God: Christian origins and the question of God. (Parts I, II, III and IV).* London: SPCK.