

## **Steve de Gruchy's theology and development model: Any dialogue with the African theology of reconstruction?**

**Gathogo, Julius**

Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa  
[jumgathogo@gmail.com](mailto:jumgathogo@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

The article sets out to demonstrate that Steve de Gruchy's model of Theology and Development (T&D), as opposed to Theologized Development or Developmental Theology, is a creative and an authentic paradigm which is in continuum with African Theology of Reconstruction (ATOR) and other theological initiatives in postcolonial Africa. As a post-colonial and/or post-apartheid theologian, De Gruchy addresses cutting-edge issues facing our contemporary society such as health, poverty, environment, sustainable livelihoods, the South-North divides, fair trade, the racial equation, the reconstruction of our social consciousness; and indeed, the changing circumstances in post-colonial (south) Africa. In its methodology, the article also hypothesizes that Development and Reconstruction are two sides of the same coin, with one clear motif, though with some distinctions. It then goes on to point out the possibility that the Leadership and Development programme that was started by Klaus Nürnberger at the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, logically preceded de Gruchy's Theology and Development (T&D) programme which continues to date, despite his demise in 2010. On the whole, the T&D and ATOR are largely seen as livelihoods theologies "from the other side of the river" that are geared towards sustainable living, especially with reference to the African context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Steve de Gruchy's contribution to development studies is certainly critical considering that he published extensively on the same; and even headed the Theology and Development programme at the then University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). His approach turns out as the beacon that maps the way out as we focus on sustainable development and the post-colonial reconstruction of Africa.

### **Keywords**

*Theology and development; African Theology of Reconstruction;  
sustainable development; sustainable livelihoods; leadership and development;  
development and reconstruction; inclusivity*

## 1. Introduction

Several theological initiatives or themes have emerged in the post-colonial Africa. Such initiatives include: African Women's Theology (AWT) which was born in 1989 – whose chief proponent is Mercy Amba Oduyoye,<sup>1</sup> a theology that insists on an inclusive two-winged theology of both men and women, rather than men alone; African theology of reconstruction (ATOR), where Africa is metaphorically seen as an existing 'wall' that however needs holistic rebirth, renaissance, renovation and rejuvenation, a theology which was born in March 1990, and whose chief proponent is Jesse Mugambi;<sup>2</sup> Afro-Pentecostalism theological model (Gathogo) where Pentecostals in Africa embrace elements of culture, unconsciously or consciously, in their discourses and eventually employs an all-embracing approaches in their theologies – unlike in the twentieth century where they were too pietistic and eventually focussed more on unrealised eschatology (future or mere heavenly concerns) as opposed to realised eschatology (present realities and concerns of the people),<sup>3</sup> and Steve de Gruchy's Theology and Development (T&D) model, where an interplay of theology and economic discourses becomes the vogue, among others. As will be demonstrated in this article, most of these initiatives share a variety of common themes. Such themes include: inclusivity, gender justice, cultural hermeneutics, liberation of African women, deconstruction of patriarchal anthropology, "healing creation, creative stewardship, Church and HIV and AIDS, liberation of African women, food security in Africa, poverty alleviation in Africa, political pluralism, and the recovery of an African identity."<sup>4</sup> Others include: environmental concern, patriarchy, sceptical appeal to some elements of African culture, health concern, HIV and AIDS, and violence.

According to Isabel Phiri, African women's theologies are a "critical, academic study of the causes of women oppression: particularly a struggle

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1 Julius Gathogo, "Mercy Oduyoye as the Mother of African Women's Theology," *Theologia Viatorum: Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2010.

2 Jesse Mugambi, *From liberation to reconstruction* (Nairobi: EAEP, 1995).

3 Julius Gathogo, "Afro-Pentecostalism and the Kenyan political landscape," *Swedish Missiological Themes (SMT)*, pp. 203–230.

4 Julius Gathogo, "Genesis, Methodologies, and Concerns of African Theology of Reconstruction," *Theologia Viatorum* 32 (1), (2008): 23–62.

against societal, cultural and religious patriarchy.”<sup>5</sup> In regard to African women theologians, she says, thus:

They are committed to the eradication of all forms of oppression against women through a critique of the social and religious dimensions both in African culture and Christianity. African women’s theologies take women’s experiences as its starting point, focusing on the oppressive areas of life caused by injustices such as patriarchy, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, capitalism, globalisation and sexism.<sup>6</sup>

In acknowledging that deconstruction of patriarchy and gender disparities forms a critical concern in the post-colonial theologies of Africa, and hence the need to reconstruct Africa, Phiri comments, thus:

The construction of womanhood by patriarchy is one of the central issues for feminist theologians globally and particularly in Africa because it has influenced the way women and the roles that women can play in African Church and society are imaged. Patriarchy has defined women as inferior to men thereby perpetuating the oppression of women by religion and culture.<sup>7</sup>

Like African theology, which was born in 1960s, post-colonial theologies in Africa tends to acknowledge plurality and/or human diversity as God’s economy for the world. In particular, John Pobee appreciates African diversity as a positive factor in African theology when he states:

This fact of pluralism in society, not least in African society, appears to be part of the divine economy. First, the historical nature of revelation implies a pluralistic situation. Second, the whole theology of love operating through human life implies pluralism, because love can be accepted only freely and not by imposition. Freedom and the possibility of choice and variety go together. Third, the story of

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5 Isabel Phiri, “Southern Africa,” in John Parratt ed. 2004. *An introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 156.

6 Isabel Phiri, “Southern Africa,” p. 156.

7 Isabel Apawo Phiri. “Doing Theology in Community: The case of African Women Theologians in the 1990’s”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (68–76) (November. 1997),11.

the Tower of Babel (Gen 2:1–9) affirms pluralism as part of God's economy for the World.<sup>8</sup>

Pobee however notes the distinctive marks that make a black African appear different from a Euro-African (referring to a non-black African who has made Africa his or her new home). Hence, he can state:

Nevertheless, one would still maintain there is a sense in which an African is marked off from the Asian or the European or the American. There is a certain Africanness about the culture and religious beliefs and practices which can be so recognised. Only let us consciously find out how and to what extent African countries and African people have changed, lest we waste time preparing to evangelise the Africa of 1800, which no longer exists.<sup>9</sup>

Although Steve de Gruchy's Theology and Development model does not appeal to issues of culture with great urgency, other post-colonial theologies of Africa take the cultural context as a strong starting point. In turn, this resonates well with African theology as John Mbiti, the de-facto founder noted, in as early as the 1960s. In particular, Mbiti sees the "return" of Christianity to Africa in the light of "this revolution." He states, thus:

Christianity from western Europe and north America has come to Africa, not simply carrying the Gospel of the New Testament, but as a complex phenomenon made up of western culture, politics, science, technology, medicine, schools and new methods of conquering nature. The Gospel by its very nature is revolutionary; but Christianity in its modern return to Africa is the main carrier of all the elements of this world revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, all post-colonial theologies in Africa, including Theology and Development, acknowledge the critical role of science and technology in the twenty-first century discourses. They appreciate the critical role of theology as a major carrier of revolutionary and transformative ideas, where science and technology is a part. This "rapid revolution," which began in

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8 John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p.24.

9 Ibid., p. 24.

10 John S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy* (Nairobi: EAEP, 1969), p.217.

the colonial era, graduated into a full-blown revolution in the twenty-first century as the improvement in civil liberties oiled it greatly. Writing in the 1960s, Mbiti saw the changing rhythm via science and technology, which has now gone a notch higher in post-colonial Africa. Mbiti noted thus:

Without warning and without physical or psychological preparation, Africa has been invaded by a world revolution. Now a new and rapid rhythm is beating from the drums of science and technology, modern communications and mass media, schools and universities, cities and towns. Nothing can halt this rhythm or slow down its rapid tempo. The man (sic) of Africa must get up and dance, for better or for worse, on the arena of world drama. His (sic) image of himself (sic) and of the universe is disrupted and must make room for the changing “universal” and not simply “tribal” man (sic).<sup>11</sup>

While Black Theology of South Africa in post-apartheid South Africa has shifted its theological gears albeit ‘quietly’ as some of its concerns have changed considerably, her current concerns are, in my view, in tandem with those of other initiatives. In particular, her concern for an *Ubuntu* (humane) society, free from xenophobia, land injustices, economic instability, gender disparities, racial supremacy, quality education, decolonisation of the mind, reverse imperialism, corruption, and neo-colonialism, among others, remains critical.<sup>12</sup> In the quest for a *Ubuntu* (humane) society in the twenty-first century thus, Black Theology of South Africa seeks to foster “communalism, interconnectedness and interdependence, [while] emphasising the three dimensional relationships, which include the living dead, the living and the yet-to-be-born.”<sup>13</sup> As noted earlier, de Gruchy’s Theology and Development model is not keen to appeal to ancestral logic. Nevertheless, its general concerns resonate well with other initiatives in post-colonial Africa. In this article, I intend to focus more on de Gruchy’s Theology and Development model versus Theology of Reconstruction model. How logical is it to separate ‘Theology’ and ‘Development’ in our

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11 John S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*, p. 216.

12 Julius Gathogo, “Black Theology of South Africa: Is this the hour of paradigm shift?” *Black Theology: An international Journal*, UK, (BT 5.3), (November 2007), pp. 327–354.

13 Lungile Mpetsheni, “Ubuntu – A Soteriological Ethic for an Effaced *Umntu* in a post 1994 South Africa: A Black Theology of Liberation Perspective” (University of Pretoria: Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2019).

schema of theologising from Developmental Theology? Any clear points of departure with Jesse Mugambi's African Theology of Reconstruction? Such concerns inform this article.

## 2. Development and reconstruction

Perhaps, it is critically important to make a brief survey of theology of reconstruction, as Jesse Mugambi the de-facto founder sees it, before we address ourselves to de Gruchy's Theology and Development model. In my doctoral thesis on "Liberation and Reconstruction in the Works of Jesse Mugambi," in 2006 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I viewed development and reconstruction as two sides of the same coin, since their common denominator is to build and/or rebuild. In Jesse Mugambi's works, post-colonial Africa is yearning not just for construction (development) but reconstruction (rebuilding) in three major dimensions (individual level that encourages optimistic attitudes amongst the African people), the ecclesial level (theologically), and at cultural level (the socio-economic areas).<sup>14</sup> Considering that Mugambi sees the 6 pillars of culture as Aesthetics, Religion, Economics, Politics, Ethics, and Kinship,<sup>15</sup> the cultural reconstruction also includes: political reconstruction, economic rejuvenation, family reconstruction, and other forms of renewal. Put it differently, the need to rebuild, and thereby develop Africa authentically demands a holistic appeal across the various sectors.

With regard to economic reconstruction, Jesse Mugambi raises his concern on the "unfair trade" at the international level, which disadvantages Africa. Concerning trade, Mugambi points to the danger of economic isolation of Africa in terms of world trade. He proposes that every country must formulate and implement policies that enhance, rather than erode, the dignity of its citizens.<sup>16</sup> He notes that a country that is capable of feeding its people should not be so careless as to depend on food relief year after year. It is therefore prudent for each individual country to formulate and implement policies that ensure production and national distribution of

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14 J. N. K Mugambi, *From Liberation to reconstruction* (Nairobi: EAEP, 1995).

15 J. N. K Mugambi, *African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity* (Nairobi: Longman, 1989), p. 129–131.

16 Mugambi, *From liberation to reconstruction*, 21.

adequate staple food for both current needs and strategic reserves. It also makes “good sense to shift from luxury cash crops to essential foods which may be locally consumed and also marketed.”<sup>17</sup>

With regard to economic reconstruction among the Churches, Mugambi stresses that the Churches, as institutions, will have to identify and develop means of income generation that are consistent with the Christian gospel.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, Mugambi proposes that the Churches ought to undertake cost-reduction measures, so that their expenditure is in line with their income. In this, Mugambi is trying to assist the Church in Africa to overcome the dependency syndrome by avoiding making budgets that are beyond their reach, thereby necessitating the begging bowl attitude towards international (western) donors in their bid to cover their deficits.<sup>19</sup> To some extent, Mugambi is also trying to remind the Church of its calling, to be good stewards and managers of God’s resources (*cf.* Lk 12: 41–48). These smooth sailing remarks by Mugambi can be critiqued on the basis that his proposals create an impression of a forward looking ‘Christian society’ that follows the ‘rules of the game’ to the latter. Considering that Africa is a one-hundred percent *Ubuntu* (humane and caring) continent, it is worthwhile to appreciate that *Ubulwane/Unyama* (antithesis of *Ubuntu*) is a major impediment to such proposals. For instance, why is there so much corruption, with its resultant poverty, in Africa despite the African nature of caring and hospitality (*Ubuntu*)? Although de Gruchy does not pontificate, as in the case of Mugambi, he attempts to tackle African woes in a somewhat different fashion, without sermonising the concerns. Nevertheless, they both create afro-optimist images.

### 3. Theology, leadership, and development in the University of Natal

In my view, Steve de Gruchy’s coinage of the phrase “Theology and Development” (T&D), as a programme in the then University of Natal, demonstrated his model of the interface between two entities, theology and

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17 Ibid., 21.

18 Ibid., 179.

19 Ibid., 179.

development. Put it differently, as one studies development and theology, he or she does not necessarily lose their respective constituencies. Was his way of avoiding other academic phrases such as “Theology of Development”, “Developmental Theology” model, and/or “Theologized Development” approaches in theo-developmental studies the ideal way, as it retains the two identities? Or was it another way of emphasizing distinctiveness in studying Development and Theology? In the University of Natal, Professor Klaus Nürnberger, before Steve de Gruchy, came up with the “Leadership and Development” (LD) programme, within the then School of Religion and Theology (SORAT), in 1997. The school has been renamed School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics, while the university of Natal became the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in 2004, after it merged with the University of Durban Westville. Upon Nürnberger’s retirement, Steve de Gruchy promoted the programme much further and it was renamed, Theology and Development, which it obtains to date. After de Gruchy passed away in 2010, Professor Beverly Haddad took over as the programme Director till she also went for retirement, and Dr Clint Le Bruyns replaced her.

Klaus Nürnberger, who had a strong background in economics prior to studying theology, explains how he journeyed with this idea. He explains thus,

I am a *theologian*. But I also have a natural sciences and economics background. My passion has been to translate the biblical message into thought patterns of today. I work on an interdisciplinary basis... As a privileged person I am afflicted by the discrepancies in income and life chances between economic centres and peripheries. I devoted a considerable part of my career on causes and possible remedies. With many of my generation, I have witnessed the agonies and conflicts produced by nationalism, colonialism and apartheid. I cannot shake off the burden of my belonging to the perpetrators.<sup>20</sup>

He goes on to say,

I was born in Swakopmund, Namibia, on the 28 January 1933 as the son of a farmer. After high school, I was trained as an agricultural

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20 [Online]. Available: <http://www.klaus-nurnberger.com/47-about-klaus/about-klaus/46-meet-klaus.html> [Accessed: June 1, 2015].



economist, obtained the degree of BSc(Agric) at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and worked briefly in the field of economic development planning. That is where my interest in economics and the natural sciences originated.<sup>21</sup>

In his post-apartheid reflection on “Christian Economics” and based on Mark 10:28–30, Klaus Nürnberger explains how the disciples had given up everything, including land, houses, fields, and families, in order to follow Christ, hence they had to necessarily lose in order to gain much more than they had bargained for. He develops his thesis by using a law in economics called “law of declining marginal utility” to explain why the richest people are not necessarily the happiest people on earth, as their demands keep on increasing. While emphasizing the importance of prudent management of our resources as the better way forward, he concluded by inviting his readers to see Christ’s reconstructive role, as God’s holistic mission to build a better world. He explains,

God wants to build a new world [reconstruction]. And he wants to build it through us [as agents]. To dismantle an old house [and ultimately reconstruct], take the bricks and build a new one [and this] takes a great effort. Builders work in the sun, with their muscles, they lose a lot of sweat. They get hurt. They are tired in the evenings. But eventually, when they see the new house they have built, their heart is full of pride and joy. They have not lived to enjoy themselves, otherwise they could have sat under the sun and drink some [refreshments]. They have spent their time building something great and beautiful. Jesus calls us to sacrifice, not because he does not want us to enjoy life to the full. No, he invites us to become part of his wonderful work of reconstruction.<sup>22</sup>

In his approach to leadership and development (L&D) thus, Nürnberger brings out the idea of reconstruction. In other words, he appreciates that development does not necessarily mean inventing the wheel but

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21 [Online]. Available: <http://www.klaus-nurnberger.com/47-about-klaus/about-klaus/46-meet-klaus.html> [Accessed: June 1, 2015].

22 Klaus Nürnberger, “Christian Economics” in Recent sermons by Klaus Nürnberger, 45–48. [Online]. Available: <http://www.klaus-nurnberger.com/recent-sermons.html> [Accessed: June 3, 2015].

building from the existing structures and moving the agenda to a higher level. This reasoning resonates well with the whole notion of theology of reconstruction, as noted in Mugambi's works. It also strikes a working chord with Steve de Gruchy's approach to Theology and Development (T&D).

#### 4. Theology and Development Programme on Pietermaritzburg Campus

Theology and Development has been well propounded by Steve de Gruchy (1961–2010) as the head of Theology and Development programme at the University of Natal, (renamed the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in 2004), Pietermaritzburg campus (2003–2010). In propounding it further, he authored dozens of scholarly articles before his tragic drowning in a river accident at Mooi River (literally meaning 'the beautiful river') in 2010. I took some courses for my post graduate studies (2003–2006) under Prof Steve de Gruchy, whom we fondly called Steve. In view of this, I can confidently affirm that this programme covered critical themes that are geared towards holistic post-colonial reconstruction of Africa. As the website of the programme thus says, it covers:

an impressive array of themes such as: *advocacy and agency, biotechnology, climate change, conflict and war, contextual bible study, corruption, critical development theories, debt, displacement, domestic violence, economic justice, environmental citizenship, ethical leadership, faith and spirituality, food security/sovereignty, freedom, gender justice, globalisation, health, HIV [and] AIDS, human dignity, human rights, identity and culture, indigenous knowledge, international aid, land, mission, participatory development, pedagogical liberation, poverty alleviation/eradication/reduction, religious assets, resistance and power, responsible citizenship, sustainable livelihoods, peace, work and labour, and various other contextually relevant topics.*<sup>23</sup>

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23 [Online]. Available: <http://theologyanddevelopment.ukzn.ac.za/about.html> [Accessed: November 6, 2019].

Certainly, Steve de Gruchy taught about the critical importance of theology engaging with cutting-edge issues facing the underdevelopment of post-colonial African society with confidence, and with a sense of patriotism that, in my view, is legendary. He could focus on issues facing the continent such as the plight of refugees and other displaced people, corruption or stealing of public resources by the elites, Asset Based Community Development, African resources such as minerals that are misused or under exploited, ecological crisis, education concern, gender disparities, dependency syndrome, bungled electioneering, people-driven development programmes, etc. and would invite us, as his students (who were pan-African in composition) to reflect on our respective countries.

Born on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1961 in Durban, South Africa, and later moving with his family to Cape Town and matriculating from the South African College High School (SACS) in 1979, Steve de Gruchy continued his studies at the University of Cape Town, obtaining an MA in Religious Studies, a Master in Sacred Theology (STM) from Union Theological Seminary, New York, and a DTh at the University of the Western Cape in 1992. In line with his theology and development project that he later came to steward, his doctoral thesis paid attention to the themes of justice and liberation in the works of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), an American theologian ethicist, public intellectual, and a commentator on politics and public affairs (read, socio-developmental issues), and professor at Union Theological Seminary for more than 30 years. Further, Reinhold Niebuhr is greatly remembered for his applied ethical assertion that human “capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but [human’s] inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”<sup>24</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. explains Niebuhr’s influence on society and the scholarly world, thus,

He persuaded me and many of my contemporaries that original sin provides a far stronger foundation for freedom and self-government than illusions about human perfectibility. Niebuhr’s analysis was grounded in the Christianity of Augustine and Calvin, but he had, nonetheless, a special affinity with secular circles. His warnings against utopianism, messianism and perfectionism strike a chord

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24 See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, (Charles Scribner & Sons, 1944).

today ... We cannot play the role of God to history, and we must strive as best we can to attain decency, clarity and proximate justice in an ambiguous world.<sup>25</sup>

As Steve de Gruchy would later do in a short span of time (2002–2010), Niebuhr influenced the scholarly thinking of the latter scholars such as: George F. Kennan, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and political historians, such as Richard Hofstadter, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Christopher Lasch. Again, politicians and activists such as U.S. President Barack Obama, former American President Jimmy Carter, Martin Luther King, Jr., Hillary Rodham Clinton, Hubert Humphrey, Dean Acheson, Madeleine Albright, and John McCain are beholden to Niebuhr's works.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, de Gruchy has left a huge constituency of pan-Africanist scholars who are passionate, developmental, and reconstructive as they undertake their scholarly assignments. As a passionate scholar in the Theology and Development (T&D) programme, de Gruchy wrote on the themes of public health, water and climate change.<sup>27</sup> He was "passionate about the way in which communities need to regain their dignity and focus on their assets in order to become more fully human."<sup>28</sup> He also supervised numerous doctoral students such as Sicily Muriithi, Benson Okyere-Manu<sup>29</sup> and Andrew Warmback among others who are great scholars in theology and development.

Other proponents of Theology and development, besides de Gruchy, include: Paulo Freire, Amartya Sen, Paul Germond,<sup>30</sup> Andrew Warmback, E. M. Conradie, ML Daneel, SK Gitau, K Nürnberger, M. T. Speckman, Clint Le Bruyns, Sthembiso Zwane, and Beverley Haddad among others.

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25 Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (September 18, 2005). "Forgetting Reinhold Niebuhr", *The New York Times*. [Online]. [Accessed: May 30, 2015].

26 Brian Urquhart (March 26, 2009). "What You Can Learn from Reinhold Niebuhr", *The New York Review of Books*. [Online]. [Accessed: May 30, 2015].

27 [Online]. Available: <http://theologyanddevelopment.ukzn.ac.za/about.html> [Accessed: 6 November 2019].

28 Eulogy which was prepared by the School of Religion and Theology-UKZN, 2010. [Online]. Available: <http://rwnel.blogspot.com/2010/02/eulogy-for-prof-steve-de-gruchy-ukzn.html> [Accessed: May 30, 2015].

29 See his book, Benson Okyere-Manu, *Engaging the Fertile Silence: A Culturally sensitive Model for dealing with the HIV and AIDS Silence* (Saabrukken: Lambert, 2010).

30 Paul Germond is a long-standing scholar in the African Religious Health Assets Programme, which is within the realm of Steve de Gruchy's Theology and Development studies.

In particular, the Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire (1921–1997), who along with Reinhold Niebuhr appears to have reshaped Steve de Gruchy's theoretical framework in his discourses on theology and development, believed that democracy in Brazil was nothing but political propaganda.<sup>31</sup> He claimed that there should be real democracy through which freedom of expression would both be cherished and practiced as a virtue. To him, all people can learn, and therefore education should be for all; and dispelled the notion that the illiterate are too ignorant to learn. Instead, he came up with what he called “Education for critical consciousness” as a way of challenging the elite group, who usually form the government, and who believed that the only privilege of the grassroots was on the terms of “assistentialism.”<sup>32</sup>

In turn, this “assistentialism” gave the impression that the Government owned all the economic resources in the country and could choose to give assistance only to those they wished. In countering such forms of corruption and ungodliness Freire, like de Gruchy and other proponents of theology and development, held that the country's wealth should belong to the citizens, for without them the nation would only be a “country landscape.”<sup>33</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Kenya, the emergency of 47 devolved governments after the promulgation of the new constitution on August 4, 2010, appears to respond positively to the cries of the proponents of theology and development (T&D) as it seeks to equitably distribute the national wealth rather than let it remain in the hands of a few elites in the central government.<sup>34</sup> Equally, recent attempts at reviewing the constitution, so as to devolve the government further, is indeed another positive attempt at equitable distribution of our national resources.

Steve de Gruchy builds his Theology and Development as two components that must necessarily work-in-hand in service to God and humanity; in the quest for abundance to the cosmos (Jn 10: 10). In his article, “Dealing with

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31 Paulo, Freire 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, Continuum.

32 Paulo Freire 1998. *Politics and education*. Los Angeles, UCLA Latin American Centre Publications.

33 Paulo, Freire 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, Continuum.

34 See Julius Gathogo 2011, *Mutira Mission: An African Church Comes of Age in Kirinyaga, Kenya (1912–2012)*. Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 7.

our Own Sewage: Spirituality and Ethics in the Sustainability,” de Gruchy like Paulo Freire appears to dispel the elitist brainwashing that disease and poverty was or is the will of God.<sup>35</sup> He cited the case of the cholera crisis in Zimbabwe, where the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that over 70,000 people were infected and 3,524 had died by February 2009. He noted this as a chilling illustration of the crucial link between water, sanitation, health, and political responsibility. For him, thus, if we can fix our politics properly, fix our management priorities prudently and eventually deal with pollutants and other underlying issues, we can contain waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid among other health issues. Just as in the case of Paulo Freire, Steve’s work will continue to influence people working in education, community health, community development, and many other fields, as it is holistic and hermeneutically reconstructive.

Like Paulo Freire, Amartya Sen – an Indian economist and philosopher of Bangladeshi origin, contributes to the “development economics” from a revolutionary perspective. In his article, “Equality of What,” he contends that only by specific and concrete “capabilities” of their citizens can governments be measured.<sup>36</sup> To him, “top-down” approach will always fail to deliver genuine development and results. It will always trump human rights, civil liberties and disempower the citizenry. By concrete steps, he argues that it is not enough for the government to guarantee the freedom to vote but it should also facilitate voters to go and vote, to educate voters, to transport voters, to guarantee security and contain violence. In this concept of “capability” thus, it is the rank-and-file of society who should be empowered to spearhead development, and not the other way around. In view of this, it is the duty of individual citizens to make the list of minimum capabilities guaranteed by that society. Such include concerns such as: sexuality, unequal rights between the genders in the developing world, welfare economics that seeks to evaluate economic policies in terms of their effects on the well-being of the community, and food crises among

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35 Steve de Gruchy 2009. “Dealing with our Own Sewage: Spirituality and Ethics in the Sustainability Agenda,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (July 2009), 53–65.

36 Amartya Sen (2010), “Equality of what?,” in MacMurrin, Sterling M., *The Tanner lectures on human values* 4 (2nd ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 195–220.

others. He also propounded his social choice theory, modern theories of justice, and comparative and realizations-oriented theories among others.<sup>37</sup> To this end, Steve de Gruchy's distinctive approach of maintaining the two entities of Theology and Development is not in isolation, albeit in different social circumstances.

## 5. From the other side of the river

In their book, *From Our Side: Emerging Perspectives on Development and Ethics*, Steve de Gruchy, Nico Koopman and Sytse Strijbos (eds, 2008), identifies the five key “important gaps that are important in the dialogue about ethics and development from a Christian perspective.”<sup>38</sup> They include: between heaven and earth, between north and south, between then and now, between theory and practice, and between structure and identity. In my view, this unconsciously or consciously appears to summarize the three key levels noted in the theology of reconstruction as propounded by Jesse Mugambi.

In their first gap, “Between heaven and earth”, Steve de Gruchy et al appreciates the critical role of religion on this side of the river (Africa). They posit that scholars from the North will always get surprised by their attempt to draw Christian ethical perspectives and “values into the realm of public debate about development ethics”,<sup>39</sup> noting that this gives room for suspicions, as the context in the North does not give huge influence to religion in public space. In the second gap, “Between North and South”, they have noted that the South and the North are not fixed categories. Clearly, there is a global South that exists in many communities of the North “where migrants, ethnic minorities and poor households do not taste the fruits of power and privilege.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, there is a range of local elites in the South “whose lifestyles closely resemble the rich and the powerful of the North.”<sup>41</sup>

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37 See also Amartya Sen, (March 1976). “Poverty: An ordinal approach to measurement”. *Econometrica* (The Econometric Society via JSTOR) 44 (2): 219–231.

38 Steve de Gruchy, Nico Koopman and Sytse Strijbos (eds, 2008), *From Our Side: Emerging Perspectives on Development and Ethics*, (Rozenberg, 2008), 1.

39 Ibid., 1.

40 Ibid., 2.

41 Ibid., 2.

As a strong proponent of post-colonial African theology of reconstruction (ATOR), I find the issues raised in Theology & Development as being clearly in tandem with the concerns in the former. Indeed, the latter is a theology that addresses the ‘other side of the river’ by insisting that post-colonial Africa has to rewrite its own stories in relevant fashion, address its concerns such as the plight of refugees, gender disparities, domestic violence, unfair trade, environmental challenge, ecclesial reconstruction, social reconstruction, individual reconstruction, economic concerns, trade embargo, aesthetic concern, poverty, ethnic disharmony, and xenophobia among others. In particular, the concern for unfair trade between the South and the North, and where the former is disenfranchised is a critical concern. In a nutshell, theology of reconstruction, as a voice “from the other side of the river” seeks to reconstruct the series of discrepancies that characterize the social life in the South. As de Gruchy et al have noted in their fifth gap, “Between structure and identity”, these discrepancies or gaps have something to do with “gender, race, class and religious convictions”.<sup>42</sup>

## 6. Sustainable livelihoods and inclusivity in development

In expounding on Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), as a critical theory in development, Steve de Gruchy sees it as seeking God’s vision of *shalom* which he further links to the abundant life that Jesus speaks of in John 10:10. In his view, it means enjoying relationships with God, with neighbours and strangers, and with the ecology. SLF finds expression in households, neighbourhoods, in the broader vision of peace with justice, in rehabilitating the marginalized, the concern for the suffering, and as God’s gracious invitation in Jesus Christ for us to participate in the *Missio Dei* by bearing faithful witness to God’s activities in the world.<sup>43</sup>

Steve de Gruchy recalls that the concept of “Sustainable Livelihoods” was first promoted by the World Commission in Environment and Development in 1987.<sup>44</sup> This was done through an advisory panel working on the issue of food and sustainable agriculture. In turn, the panel contended that the

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42 Ibid., 5.

43 Steve de Gruchy, “A Christian Engagement with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework,” *Missionalia* 33, 1 (2005), 56–72.

44 de Gruchy, “A Christian Engagement with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.”



poor and their livelihoods need to be the starting point of any analysis and strategy for food security.<sup>45</sup> He summarizes the livelihoods asset portfolio as including: human capital, natural capital, financial capital, physical capital, and social capital. By human capital, it refers to skills, good health, knowledge, and ability to labour; and indeed, the foundational asset in sustainable livelihoods.

Characteristically, Sustainable Livelihood Frameworks speaks of outcomes rather than objectives, as people in the society are the ones who know what they need. SLF also have bias towards sustainable livelihoods. As Chambers and Conway argue, a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and “recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.” Additionally, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) sees sustainable livelihoods as those that are ecologically sound and also those that are able to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses such as civil unrest, civil war, genocide, and drought among others.<sup>46</sup> In view of this, the failure to speed up post war reconstruction of Somalia, as in the case of post genocide Rwanda, points to the challenge of religious bigotry and/or extremism in our contemporary world. Certainly, authentic development and/or reconstruction can only take place in a violence free world.

In his quest for a sustainable society, in particular, Jesse Mugambi polemically wonders: “Why should liberation and Exodus continue to dominate African Christian theological thinking while Africa is longing for other relevant paradigms and metaphors [such as restoration and reconstruction]?”<sup>47</sup> He goes on to summarize the theology of reconstruction, thus:

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45 WCED, “Food 2000: Global Policies for Sustainable Agriculture. A Report of the Advisory Panel on Food Security, Agriculture, Forestry and environment to the World Commission on Environment and Development” (London: Zed Books, 1987), 3–4.

46 UNDP, *Sustainable Livelihoods Unit Home Page*, 1999. [Online]. Available: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/overview.html> [Accessed: 21 June 2016].

47 Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 24.

This theology should be reconstructive rather than destructive; inclusive rather than exclusive; proactive rather than reactive; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme-driven rather than project-driven; people centred rather than institution-centred; deed-oriented rather than word-oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative; future-sensitive rather than past-sensitive; co-operative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than impositional.<sup>48</sup>

Critically important to note is that the above dichotomies do not contradict the two theologies (T&D versus ATOR). Indeed, the themes of inclusivity, complementarity, integrating, programme-driven, people-driven, participatory, and consultative are commonly used terms in theology and development (T&D), just as in the latter. It resonates well with the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), Sustainable Livelihoods Frameworks (SLF), and dependency syndrome among others, which are common features in T&D.

## **7. Conclusion**

The article begun by attempting to retrace Steve de Gruchy's model where Theology and Development (T&D) are addressed as two different entities rather than being covered as Theologized Development (TD), or Developmental Theology (DT). This distinctive identity ensures that no phrase swallows down or compromises the another. The article has also demonstrated that even if Steve de Gruchy popularized T&D programme in the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Klaus Nürnberger had by 1997 commenced teaching Development studies within the then School of Religion and Theology (SORAT), now School of Philosophy, Religion and Classics, under the banner of 'Leadership and Development' (LD) programme. De Gruchy can however be seen as one who catapulted the programme to a higher level that attracted students from across the continents in unprecedented manner. His concern for ecology, health, poverty, sustainable livelihoods among others introduced fresh impetus

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48 Ibid., xv.

akin to Jesse Mugambi's pioneering of African theology of reconstruction, in post-colonial Africa. In turn, the article has demonstrated that de Gruchy's works and that of Jesse Mugambi's are clearly in working agreement in in many areas. As post-colonial and/or post-colonial attempts at rebuilding Africa, the two theologies as propounded by the duo are indeed studied from the same continuum.

In conclusion Paulo Freire reminds us about the true generosity that must be seen as the key to any contemporary theology (refer to African Theology of Reconstruction versus Theology and Development). Freire thus says:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hand. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work, and working, transform the world.<sup>49</sup>

With vote-seeking politicians in my Kenyan context forming the habit of giving handouts rather than empowering people economically, so as to avoid deficiency syndrome and/or dependency syndrome, I find Freire's caution touches a concern that cuts across centuries and generations. Certainly, the post-colonial reconstructive phase in its various levels of reconstruction calls for genuine empowerment for her peoples. She needs to have people who are well trained to fish rather than dependants who fatalistically wait for the fish to be brought to them from any quarters. Clearly Steve de Gruchy's Theology and Development model is reconstructive in its overall motif; and indeed, the most relevant model for Africa at this time in time.

The only major critique that remains in de Gruchy's works is why he ignored indigenous cultures in his schema of theology and development. In his Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), didn't he find indigenous resources as critical in development and theology? In a continent which is one hundred percent *ubuntu* (concern for the other), was it right for him to ignore the works of Gabriel Setiloane, Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, and Christian Gaba among others in his ABCD? His huge contributions cannot

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49 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 27.

be gainsaid. Equally, his theological trajectory will always be seen on par with other post-colonial African initiatives such as: African women's theology, Black theology, afro-Pentecostal theology, and African theology of reconstruction.

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