in a society. This alone can safeguard human rights from becoming a soft weapon in the ideological cold war. This alone can help human rights to fulfil their aim of paving the way to a free, just and peaceful human society. The same is true with the symbol of freedom. Our 'western' understanding of freedom tends to be individualistic and nationalistic. We claim the freedom to do what we like, with the corollary that we must respect the freedom of others. With this definition we overlook, however, that every 'other' becomes a possible limiter of my freedom and thus a potential enemy. The resources of faith remind us that freedom is a relational reality so that I can only be truly free together with the 'other'. The liberated conscience will therefore understand other human beings not as potential enemies, who constantly threaten to limit its freedom, but it will seek the welfare of others, knowing that they are potential sources of life and freedom.

As a final illustration we mention that although the Christian faith will encourage people to become aware of their rights and to claim them in their pilgrimage of liberation, the resources of faith also entail the power *not* to claim one's own rights if this is seen to be more conducive in paving the way for justice and peace.

4. OUTLOOK

The promise of human rights is that they may provide the moral foundation for the humane survival of the human race. The greatest problem in respect to human rights is the lack of implementation. If we as Christians and as churches can presume that the providential activity of God is at work in the human rights tradition, then it must be part be part of the mission of the church to make its contribution to the codification and implementation of human rights.

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Reconciliation: A Reality or Simply Political Correctness

Allison Howell

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To live under a curse imposes a heavy burden, but the Kasena, Builsa, Frafra and Sisaala people of Northern Ghana have the legacy of a double curse in their past. They share the same curse of sin that the whole human race has been under, but they also have had to face the curse of slavery and the disruption that it has brought to life. The Builsa,

Frafra and Kasena predominantly live in dispersed extended family compounds while the Sisaala live in clustered villages. All are mostly involved in subsistence farming that has been passed on to them from their founding ancestors.

A GROWING AWARENESS OF THE PAIN OF THE PAST

Although the slave trade was officially abolished in Britain and the United States in 1807, the traffic of slaves within Africa continued and more slaves were smuggled across the Atlantic between 1807 and 1833 than during the pre-abolition period.[1] Slavery and apprenticeship were finally abolished in Britain in 1838, but this did not stop the slave raids in Northern Ghana which continued to feed both an internal market and the external market associated with nations that had not abolished slavery. For the Northern Ghanaians, the most intensive period of slave raiding occurred between the 1860s and 1900.[2]

When I first went to Northern Ghana in 1981 as part of a church planting team[3], I had little knowledge or understanding of this background. Slowly I became aware that there had been slave raids in the area. The Kasena have a word, *gwala*, specifically used to refer to the raids. The Builsa people each year celebrate *Feok*, their harvest festival. The festival is also used to celebrate their defeat of the slave raider, Babatu.[4] However, in my cultural learning I occasionally only noted a person's reference to the raids and my colleagues and I thought little about the legacy of the raids in the society and psychology of the people.

As people responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ, so the church grew. From time to time there were differences of opinion, misunderstandings and occasionally disputes between church leaders and missionaries. On two occasions, a mediator stepped in to help a church leader and myself resolve a misunderstanding.

In 1988, the church leaders and missionaries began to look seriously at the whole issue of conflict and conflict resolution within the context of our ministry. The crisis came when the church asked for the removal of one missionary who had offended them. They also expressed grievances about the way other missionaries dealt with cultural issues, did not show hospitality, did not visit Ghanaians in their homes and did not trust them, especially with finances. Prior to that time my colleagues and I had always attempted to resolve conflicts according to our perception of a 'biblical pattern', but often that seemed only to heighten the problem and cause further misunderstanding.

It was at this point that a number of Kasena church leaders and I began to explore the cultural beliefs and practices related to the causes of disputes, the types of disputes the Kasena classify and how they attempt to resolve them. We met to discuss our findings and to examine our own cultural patterns of resolving conflicts as expatriates. We discussed

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[1] 1. Albert van Danzig, *Forts and Castles of Ghana*, (Accra: Sedco, 1980), p. 66.

[2] 2. Allison Howell, 'The slave trade and its impact on Northern Ghana', in Allison Howell (ed), *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation: A Northern Ghanaian Perspective*, (Accra: Bible Church of Africa and SIM Ghana, 1998), p. 43.

[3] 3. SIM Ghana missionaries began a church planting ministry in Northern Ghana in 1978 among the Kasena, Builsa, Frafra and Sisaala. Originally, the partner church was known as The Good News Church of Ghana, but in 1995, the church changed its name to the Bible Church of Africa to reflect the church's own involvement in mission outside Ghana. The Bible Church of Africa and SIM Ghana are autonomous organisations but co-ordinate ministries through a Joint Committee.

[4] 4. George Atemboa, 'The impact of the slave trade on the Builsa', in *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation*, pp. 23–30.

the strengths and weaknesses of each other's socio-cultural patterns. We analysed these patterns in terms of biblical patterns and then developed principles for working through cross-cultural conflict.[5] This was a new step of openness in the path of the relationship between the church and the mission. Together we formed a Joint Committee of Church and Mission to mutually discuss areas of ministry and concern, with the church having predominant numbers.

As years passed by, conflicts and misunderstandings from time to time would rumble to the surface and hurt would be expressed. One fact that became apparent was that we tended to relate mostly in a 'work' capacity and in 'meetings'. In terms of friendship and entering into one another's homes, this was infrequent and often the atmosphere was formal. In addition, while doing in-depth research into the background history of the Kasena people in 1992, I became aware that there was still a deep wound from what happened during the years of the slave trade.[6]

In 1994, Rev. Johnson Asare, the President of the Bible Church of Africa, and Ruby Mikulencak, an SIM missionary, voiced a desire for a partnership consultation. All church leaders and missionaries would be able to spend several days staying together, not to discuss work and business, but to talk about our relationship and to listen to one another. An external facilitator was invited to lead us through the discussions. We met for three days at the beginning of 1995 and talked and played games.

The facilitator used a series of stimulating and thought-provoking simulations to make us reflect on and think through the meaning of partnership. We examined the strengths and weaknesses of the church/mission relationship and the church and the mission each visualized their thoughts through the use of symbols. There was pain and hurt to watch a group from the church symbolically express their view that the mission oppressed the church: they placed a small piece of discoloured cloth symbolizing the church on the ground, and then on the top of it they placed a large rock symbolizing the Mission.

The church said some difficult things about us as a mission; however, jointly, and in a very open atmosphere, we were able to discuss four issues raised by the church and one highlighted by the mission. Together we made recommendations for improvements in our relationship. This Partnership Consultation was the beginning of a series of similar consultations.

In January 1998, we again met but this time to talk about our joint vision. During the discussions it became apparent that there were difficulties between some church leaders and some missionaries. Finally, a church leader told how he had gone with a group of other Ghanaians to visit Cape Coast Castle. Together they stood in the male dungeon—a tiny, damp and dark room where 300 to 400 slaves were crammed before they were pushed through 'the gate of no return' on to slave ships. One man commented, 'As for the whites, we can't forgive them. The way they treated my grandfathers, I'm not going to forgive them.' The church leader then went on to say, 'Sometimes when missionaries do things that hurt us, we can't help thinking back to the slave trade and asking, "Are they any different"?' There were wounds from this event that were still having implications in our relationship.

The reference to the slave trade was not an isolated comment. Memories of the slave trade still exist in Northern Ghana. The castles along Ghana's coast are a stark reminder of the brutality of slavery. Furthermore, over the past few years, there has been increasing

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[5] 5. Allison Howell, *Working together cross-culturally: Some lessons learned from Northern Ghana*, (Accra: SIM Ghana, 1996).

[6] 6. The author has published a detailed account of the Kasena in her book, *The Religious Itinerary of a Ghanaian People: The Kasena and the Christian Gospel*, (Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1997).

publicity in the Ghanaian news media. Southern Ghanaian chiefs have poured libations to their ancestors to atone for the part that their ancestors played in the slave trade.[7] Most significantly, increasing numbers of African-Americans are visiting Ghana to learn something of their identity. Plans are also underway to re-open slave routes and re-develop slave markets for people to visit.

The church leader's comment highlighted to us the need to talk jointly in the north of Ghana about the slave trade and the gospel of Jesus Christ. We made a joint decision to hold a seminar at which we would discuss the impact of the slave trade on northern peoples and the relevance of the gospel of Jesus Christ in it. This would constitute another step forward in the process of understanding one another, learning from each other and facing unresolved issues.

THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE GOSPEL: PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION

In planning for the seminar, five church leaders and two missionaries were each asked to prepare presentations. John Bosco Bawiah, a Kasena pastor, opened the seminar with a devotion on Romans 6:15–22, 'From slaves of sin to children of God'. Four church leaders, Boniface Akantoe (Nankani), Kwame Jua (Sisaala), Francis Kupoe (Kasena) and George Atemboa (Builsa) prepared papers on the impact of the slave trade on their own ethnic group. They were given a series of questions to guide them in their research on the effect of the slave raids:

- What stories do your people tell about slave raids?
- What songs tell about the slave raids or people defeating the slave raiders?
- What shrines are associated with the slave raids or defeating the slave raiders? What do you know about these shrines, their powers and how people use them today?
- What effects did the slave raids have on the Kasena people?

Each leader was also asked to reflect on how Christ, as the one authentic Lord of history acted to reclaim and redeem the past.[8] Although Christ was not named in the Old Testament, the apostle Paul saw Christ's presence and action in the history of the Exodus (1 Cor. 10:1–4 and Ex. 17:1–7). The 'rock was Christ' that gave water in the wilderness wanderings. The four church leaders considered the following questions:

- What Scripture passages show you that Jesus Christ was present in your past and that it was Christ who acted to save your people from the slave raids?
- How do you show your people and others outside that Christ was present at the time of the slave raids and wants to redeem their past?

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[7] 7. Nana Kwadwo Akpan, 'Purifying a people's soul', *Daily Graphic*, 3 December 1994, p. 5; 'Chiefs to be cleansed of misdeeds in slave trade', *Ghanaian Times*, 7 December 1994, p. 1; 'Stools and skins purified,' Ghanaian Times, 10 December 1994, p. 15; 'They shed tears for ancestors,' Daily Graphic, 12 December 1994, pp. 1, 8–9.

[8] 8. Kwame Bediako 'The Gospel as Alpha and Omega of culture: the African Dimension,' *Akrofi-Christaller Centre News*, No. 20 (January–June 1997), pp. 8–11. Bediako discusses this passage and asks in relation to the Ga Homowo festival, 'May not Ga Christians revisit Ga history and redirect the whole community's attention to the one authentic Lord of history, Jesus Christ, to whom alone credit is due?'

- How can Christians today celebrate the fact that it was Christ who delivered them from the slave raids? What will Christians do now to celebrate Christ's salvation?
- How, as Christians, do we show the community that we celebrate or remember these events because of the role that we have now discovered Christ played in our past?
- How does this help you tell others about the Good News of Jesus Christ?
- What will Christians do, as a result of seeing Christ acting in their past, to help other Christians grow in their faith?

Each church leader found that the memory of the slave raids lives on in the minds of their people. Songs are still sung that speak of different aspects of the slave raids. In the Sisaala town of Gwollu, the remnants of a wall remain that their forefathers built to protect themselves from slave raiders. Some groups were more devastated than others. The leaders spoke of disruption to their forefathers' lives through hunger when food was destroyed or confiscated by raiders; through parents sometimes having to sell their own children because of hunger; and through the capture or death of family members. They referred to the long-term legacy of hatred not only towards whites, but towards those in other ethnic groups and within their own communities who were involved in the traffic of humans.

Amongst several groups, the present day power of certain earth shrines is traced back to the salvific role these shrines played in preserving or delivering people from the raids. On the north side of Chiana in the Kasena community stands a large granite hill known as Zambao. It is the predominant earth shrine of the area. People took refuge there during the raids and from that position attacked the slave raiders and drove them out. People today credit Zambao with saving them. In his paper, Francis Kupoe referred to the hills mentioned in Psalm 121 and noted that the Psalmist not only knew that God created the hills, but describes God as his Helper (v.2), Shade (v.5), Protector (v.7) and Guard (v.8). Kupoe described the hills in Chiana as God's protective measure for the Kasena.[9]

The realization that the slave raids in Northern Ghana had occurred as part of a wider phenomenon led me into writing a paper on the historical background of the whole history of slavery. It was revealing to learn that in the tenth and eleventh centuries 'Western Europeans and Arabs raided and attacked Slavonic peoples and sold them into slavery'.[10] I. Hbrek states that 'Slavonic prisoners of war must have formed the bulk of the slave population in Western Europe'.[11] So great was this slave movement that the word for slave in all western European languages comes from the word 'Slav', which is the name that the various Slavonic peoples of Eastern Europe used for themselves. They were also exported to Muslim countries. Perhaps this gives us a better understanding of the lengthy background of bitterness, hatred and retaliation that still exists in places such as Kosovo and Yugoslavia today.

The writing of the paper was difficult, particularly when I was faced with the findings of Thomas Foxwell Buxton, the evangelical British parliamentarian, who learnt that 'in 1837 and 1838, more slaves were crossing the Atlantic than when Wilberforce began his

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[9] 9. Francis Kupoe, 'The impact of the slave trade on the Kasena', in *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation*, p. 21.

[10] 10. Allison Howell, 'The slave trade and its impact on Northern Ghana', in *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation*, p. 35.

[11] 11. I. Hrbek (ed), *General History of Africa: III Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, Abridged Edition, (London: James Currey, 1988 and 1992), p. 7.

campaign fifty years earlier'.[12] He found that in the raiding, marketing, passage and landing of slaves, seven out of every ten slaves captured were murdered. Africa was being depopulated at the rate of half a million people per year. The slave trade was blocking Christian preaching and blocking Africa from economic benefits. My response to the issue was expressed in personal terms.

> As I personally reflect on the details of what is in this document, it leaves me with profound sadness at the actions of our white forefathers. Although I am an Australian, my ancestors mostly come from Britain and were there during the period when the greatest numbers of slaves were being shipped out of Africa to the Americas. I am sorry for and deeply regret the actions of my nation and my forefathers.
> I look at the sins of my forefathers for their view of black Africans as inferior and of no worth. I see their sin in using Scripture to justify oppression, brutality and inhuman treatment. I see their sin of greed in wanting to make profits by abusing African life to do so. We are shamed by what has been done for we as a nation have sinned against God. I apologize for the subtle attitudes of superiority that sometimes creep into my life and work. All that I am and have is only because of the grace of God.[13]

Discussion of past events such as this has the potential to re-open old wounds and hatreds. Both Ghanaians and missionaries have raised questions: 'What does this have to do with us? We weren't even there! What does all this have to do with the gospel?' In the conclusion of my paper I said that what we talk about

> is not for the purpose of stirring up hatred and bitterness. Every Christian should go back into his or her past armed with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not to try and 'restore' its glory or to 'wallow' in its misery, but to allow the Gospel of Jesus Christ to 'redeem' it. This is an important way of bringing transformation to culture and life and of moving forward in our Christian faith.[14]

The slave trade had an impact not only on the physical lives of people, but also on the spiritual realm. Together as a group we looked at God's action in freeing the Israelites from slavery and the implications that had for Northern Ghana.

Jay Moon addressed the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation. In his paper, he referred to an Angolan proverb which says that, 'The one who throws the stone forgets; the one who is hit remembers forever.' He then added, 'It may be easy for those whose ancestors participated in the slave trade to forget about it and get on with life. The one who was enslaved, however, was hit with a stone that left a deep wound. He can never forget it unless the wound is uncovered and healed.'[15] Moon argued that 'When slavery started, the devil opened a wound spiritually that has brought a curse upon us. This wound is deep and is oozing with infection. We can't wait any longer. We cannot ignore it or shamefully cover it up. The time has come to start the healing, otherwise, we will be like sick men and women in need of life-saving surgery.'

He referred to the story in 2 Samuel 21 where a similar situation occurred during the reign of King David. King David found out that a wound had been covered up. Famine came on the land and when David consulted the Lord, the Lord showed him that Saul and his

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[12] 12. Andrew Walls, 'The Legacy of Thomas Foxwell Buxton,' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1991, p. 75.

[13] 13. Allison Howell, op. cit., pp. 52, 53.

[14] 14. Ibid., p. 53.

[15] 15. Jay Moon, 'Forgiveness and reconciliation', in *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation*, p. 59.

family were guilty of murdering the people of Gibeon. King Saul had died, but in his lifetime he had violated an oath that the Israelites had made with the Gibeonites four hundred years before (Joshua 9). Moon noted that

> The famine happened during the reign of King David. King David was from the tribe of Judah. Joshua was the one who made the treaty with the Gibeonites. He was not from the tribe of Judah, he was from the tribe of Ephraim. They were from two different tribes all together—just like Kasena and Builsa are both Ghanaian but are totally different ethnic groups. The man who broke the treaty was Saul who was not from the tribe of Judah or from the tribe of Ephraim. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. The people who suffered from the famine were not just the tribe of Benjamin. All twelve tribes suffered since God held all twelve tribes responsible.[16]

King David still had to deal with this wound. His confession resulted in forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. Moon drew out two principles that need to be acknowledged

- The blessing and the curse of the past affect the present.
- When the leaders of a people sin and the people passively accept it, then the whole group is accountable before God.[17]

After reading Matthew 18:20–35, where Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant, Moon addressed his Northern Ghanaian Colleagues:

> This story is very powerful in Ghana today because you have the ointment to bring about healing. Your people were made slaves; they have been sinned against. Now God has chosen you to become a Christian. Jesus paid the big debt of sin for you and your debt is no longer there. Now, Jesus hands you the healing ointment and says,
>
> 'Forgive those who have sinned against you just as I have forgiven you.' You have the key to bring about the healing in Jesus' name. If you offer forgiveness in Jesus' name, then the process to heal the wound will begin.[18]

In his reference to the wound, Moon acknowledged that the wound had been passed on from one generation to another—from parents to their children. The hatred and bitterness would continue to be passed on if we did not allow God to cleanse the wound. Moon concluded by stating.

> Today, I want to take off the cover of denial and confess the sins of my forefathers. It was my people that sinned against your people and because of that, we have a wound today. I am deeply sorry for the pain that you have suffered. When you talk behind my back, I know it is because of the wound.[19]

Moon then stated that the only way he could express what he felt was by washing the feet of the Chairman of the Inter Church District Council, Rev. Stephen Aputara. In his response, Aputara called forward the SIM northern team leader, Ruby Mikulencak and in a symbolic gesture, he and four other church leaders washed their feet. As they did so he quietly stated:

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[16] 16. Ibid., pp. 59, 60.

[17] 17. Ibid., p. 56.

[18] 18. Ibid., p. 63.

[19] 19. Ibid., pp. 66, 67.

> [This] is not a ceremony. It is not a drama. It is something that we are demonstrating before God that indeed we are very sorry for anything that the church has done against the mission. For the old wounds that we still think of and this is a symbol to demonstrate the past anger is gone and we have forgotten everything, forgiven each other and we move forward together.

Words cannot adequately express the atmosphere in the room at that time. The church asked that the papers and what had happened during the seminar be put in writing as a testimony to what was said so that we would not forget what had passed between us.

THE IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF RECONCILIATION

During the discussion and interaction at the end of the seminar, an older church leader sat quietly weeping. He said nothing but after the seminar he told how another family in his village had sold his grandfather into slavery. When he tried to escape, the slave raiders cut the fingers off one of his hands. The man finally escaped when the slaves reached the coast. Slowly he made his way up north and on arrival in his village, called his family together and as he showed them his hand he spat out the words, 'Never forget what they did to me.'

The leader told how they had never forgotten. Ever since that time, his family had been estranged from the family that sold his grandfather. A bitter root of animosity had become a permanent part of their community. He said, 'I even told my son about them.' Then he added, 'At the seminar, I wept because I realized that I now need to go and undo what I told my son, and our family must forgive this family for selling my grandfather.' Another Christian told me that another man had taken his wife and given her to another man. It had caused a huge dispute. Even though the Christian remarried, he gave one of his children a name related to the fight so that he would never forget. He said he had realized his need to forgive and to change his child's name.

We printed copies of the papers presented at the seminar but were then asked to publish them as a small book. The church wanted to hold a 'Book Launching Ceremony' at the beginning of 1999. In the course of preparing for the event, several church leaders and myself were asked to meet the Guest-of-Honour, a government official, to discuss the aims of the ceremony. He aggressively questioned us about our motives in wanting to raise the issue of the slave trade. He argued that it would only cause bitterness. We explained that the purpose of the seminar was not to stir up hatred and bitterness, but for us together to go back into the past so that the Good News of Jesus Christ might redeem the past and bring forgiveness and reconciliation. He seemed satisfied with our account of what had transpired.

On the day of the Book Launch, his assistant, who had not been present at our meeting with the Guest-of-Honour, asked us for help in preparing the latter's speech. As we discussed with him the contents of the book and related what had happened at the seminar, the assistant paused in his writing and admitted, 'I really like what the church has done.' He told us how he had attended a seminar in another region the previous year. One speaker had strongly criticized the ethnic groups in Ghana who had been involved in slave raiding. He added, 'What the speaker said made me angry.' He then indicated that he was from one of the slave raiding ethnic groups that we knew to be predominantly Muslim. It was at that point that we realized that the testimony of the church and Mission had had an impact on a Muslim! In addition, during the actual ceremony, the Guest-of-Honour fully acknowledged and endorsed the process of forgiveness and reconciliation that had begun between the church and Mission. He also challenged disputing communities to embrace the same course of action.

Furthermore, as a result of a report I sent to a group of supporting churches and individual Christians in Australia, a number of people raised questions about the relevance of reconciliation. 'Why apologize for the past when we weren't involved? Hasn't reconciliation just become a matter of "political correctness"?'

It has been these little unexpected reactions that have made us realize that what occurred in a small room amongst sixty people on the margins of Ghana, had potentially far wider implications than we had ever stopped to consider.

In recent years, the word 'reconciliation' has become closely associated with a number of nations attempting to come to terms with their past.[20] In Australia, for instance, there has been significant publicity concerning the maltreatment of Aboriginal people since the beginning of white settlement.[21] The revelations concerning the 'Stolen Generation' have brought to light what happened to an estimated 100,000 young aborigines of mixed race who were forcibly removed from their families and fostered in white homes in the name of 'assimilation'.[22]

The origins of this practice go back to the nineteenth century social Darwinist belief. Until the 1960s, successive governments believed that mixed race Aborigines would be more easily assimilated into white society than those of full descent, thus leading to the dying out of the Aboriginal race. The discredited policy has left a deep wound within the nation. There is deep hurt amongst Aboriginal Australians. White Australian reactions cover a broad spectrum from extreme guilt to complete denial of any wrongdoing. In 1997, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation held an Australian Reconciliation Convention and this was followed by a 'National Sorry Day' in May 1998. On both occasions, Christians raised questions about the meaning of the word 'reconciliation'. Is the concept of reconciliation as understood by different groups in society the same as the Scriptural interpretation of reconciliation? Did it involve seeking justice and the question of compensation?

In Peter Fryer's extensive and insightful study on the history of Black People in Britain,[23] he points out that the British cities of Bristol and Liverpool were turned into boom towns and great world ports by the slave trade.[24] The profits netted by British slave-merchants are estimated to be 'about £12,000,000 on the 2,500,000 Africans they brought and sold between *c.* 1630 and 1807, and perhaps half of this profit accrued between 1750 and 1790'.[25] The trade stimulated the growth of banking facilities and shipbuilding. He documents in detail the growth in wealth of individuals, banks and industry. It is information such as this that prompts questions to be raised both in Africa and amongst

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[20] 20. Reconciliation has also been the theme at a number of Christian conferences. *Reconciliation in Difficult Places: Dealing with our Deepest Differences, The Washington Forum: Perspectives on our Global Future, Monrovia, Office of Advocacy and Education*, World Vision, 1994. Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (eds), *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1997).

[21] 21. Bruce Elder provides a very graphic description of this in his book, *Blood on the Wattle: Massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians since 1788* (Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.: Child & Associates, 1988.)

[22] 22. In 1997, a report was published of the inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal children. Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Bringing Them Home, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from the Families, 1997.

[23] 23. Peter Freyer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, (London: Pluto Press, 1984).

[24] 24. Ibid., p. 33.

[25] 25. Ibid., p. 36.

African-Americans about the need for reparation and restitution. Do issues such as social justice and restitution need to be addressed as part of reconciliation?

THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

The background to reconciliation in Scripture is broken relationships. Francis Schaeffer points out that there are four areas of broken relationship as a consequence of the Fall:

1. Spiritual division—a person is separated from God.
2. Psychological division—a person is separated from himself or herself.
3. Sociological division—a person is separated from others in society.

Ecological division—a person is separated from nature and nature is divided from nature itself.[26]

The apostle Paul writes about the restoration of broken relationships. He tells us that 'in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us', (2 Cor. 5:19, NRSV). God's move in restoring our broken relationship was to forgive us. His death on the cross was an act of grace—the offended one forgiving the offender. Moreover, on the cross Jesus forgave the offending party before there was any sign of repentance or remorse (Lk. 23:34). Therefore, reconciliation has to do with overcoming enmity or the bridging over of a quarrel.

Christ did not stop with his own act of reconciliation for he gave to us a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). Schaeffer reasons that on the basis of the work of Christ on the cross, Christ opened a way for all Christians to work 'for substantial healings now in every area where there are divisions'.[27] Christ commissioned us to 'make disciples of all nations'. This includes the gospel of Jesus Christ bringing healing to the divisions that we as humans have created between ourselves. According to the Ghanaian theologian, Kwame Bediako,

> The Great Commission is about the discipling of the nations, the conversion of the things that make people into nations—the shared processes of thinking, the common attitudes, world views, languages, cultural, social and economic habits of thought and behaviour and practice—all those things and the lives of the people in whom those things find expression—are meant to be within the call of discipleship, including [n]ationality itself.

He then adds,

> In our preaching of Jesus Christ to the nations, then, God calls peoples to bring under the lordship of Jesus Christ all those things which they reckon enable them set (sic) themselves apart from other people, and which they sometimes use to distinguish themselves from others as though superior to them.[28]

The gospel therefore brings reconciliation between God and humans, and reconciliation between people. If reconciliation means overcoming enmity, the way to overcome that enmity must include dealing with the cause of the quarrel or problem. The

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[26] 26. Francis Schaeffer and U. Middleman, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1992), p. 66.

[27] 27. Schaeffer, op. cit., p. 67.

[28] 28. Kwame Bediako, 'Mission Issues in Africa Today', *Africa Theological Fellowship (ATF) Bulletin*, No. 1 (October 1995), pp. 6, 7.

ultimate cause of the problem in every case is human sinfulness, but human sinfulness causes injustice and harm. In the Old Testament, God's passionate desire for justice is illustrated in his concern for restitution and compensation for wrong done (see Ex. 21; Lev. 5:14–6:7 and 21:1–37). Reconciliation, particularly when related to wrongs committed in the past, therefore, involves the following process:

- Understanding the hurt and pain of the present related to the hurt of the past. This involves listening to the offended party talk about their grievances.
- Going back into the past to allow Christ to redeem the past. The offenders must admit the wrongs of the past just as Daniel confessed the past sins of his nation (Dan. 9:4ff). It means also acknowledging the shame we bear because of the wrongful actions that occurred. This must include the confession of our own sinful attitudes, particularly that of superiority. For the offended or wronged party, there is also confession, especially of bitterness or enmity towards the offenders.
- Saying we are sorry. This is not a trite verbal statement, for it means turning around. It is the conversion of our attitudes, our habits of thought and our shared processes of thinking.
- The offended party unconditionally forgiving the offenders. In Christ's action on the cross, he was the offended party. He did not demand that the offending party compensate. Rather he forgave unconditionally by paying the debt that humans deserved to pay. In Christ, forgiveness does not depend upon a promise of compensation or even addressing issues of injustice. Compensation and restitution are actions that flow out of forgiveness.

Addressing the issue of reparation and restitution. Compensation and restitution cannot be ignored, but neither should they be defined only in monetary or economic terms for they also affect patterns of thought and behaviour.

In conclusion, from the five points above we see that reconciliation is not an expression of political correctness. It is a process of bringing together those that have been hostile to each other. Our experience in Northern Ghana helped us to understand the relevance of the process of reconciliation to the restoration of broken relationships between God and humans and between human beings themselves. It was not only a matter for us as missionaries to acknowledge shame and apologize for the wrongful actions of our forefathers, but we needed to acknowledge the attitude of superiority that western missionaries often communicate (whether consciously or subliminally) towards those with whom God has sent us to work. It is often reflected in the independent manner in which we make decisions, the failure to consult the church prior to taking action, and the assumption that 'we have come to help you'. It is therefore evident that reconciliation has implications for healing beyond just the offended and offending parties as it causes others to examine their relationship not only with God, but also with others.

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