

ASSOCIATION PANAFRICAINNE

DES EXÉGÈTES CATHOLIQUES



PANAFRICAN ASSOCIATION

OF CATHOLIC EXEGETES

**Conflits et réconciliation
dans la Bible.**

*Contribution des exégètes
africains*

Actes du quatorzième congrès de
l'Association Panafricaine des
Exégètes Catholiques

**Conflicts and Reconni-
liation in the Bible:**

*The Contribution of African
Exegetes*

Proceedings of the Fourteenth
Congress of the Panafican
Association of Catholic Exegetes

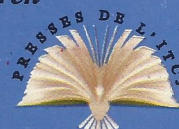
Ouidah (Bénin) du 02 au 08 septembre 2009



*Sous la direction de :
Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat*

*Editeurs :
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Abidjan, 2015



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ISBN: 979-10-92849-02-8

The Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14-21): Its Relevance for the Future of Africa

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0. Introduction

Reconciliation (καταλλαγή) is a nomenclature that forms part and parcel of relationship and experience. It is one of the diverse terms, which Paul used to describe the beginning and process of salvation¹. In conventional use, reconciliation is what happens when two or more opposing or contrasting parties come together and resolve their differences. Sometimes, the two parties in conflict need the effort of a mediator, who persuades one of the parties to drop off anger and to follow the path towards peace. At other times, the mediator persuades the offender to restore a deprived right or privilege in order to placate the offended party. Justice is brought about with the restoration of deprived rights and properties. Peace is a state of tranquility and harmony that follows reconciliation.

In some African societies, reconciliation does not simply happen in a round table or conversation encounter. Certain events and rites accompany the process of true reconciliation.

¹Other terms are: justification, atonement, expiation, redemption, liberation and freedom. Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh 1998) 328-329.

Sometimes, it goes through a process that is called "palaver". Furthermore, reconciliation is accomplished in a ritual encounter in which the two parties participate and oblige themselves for the future. At most, the reconciliation event includes both the palaver and the rite. The description of reconciliation in popular parlance, in African societies and in the Old Testament differs from the sense in which reconciliation is described in the New Testament.

In 2009, the topic of reconciliation was the theme for the Synod of bishops for the African Church because the Church has considered that the African continent needs the restoration that comes with reconciliation, justice and peace. The African continent is battered by many and diverse conflicts – political, religious, cultural, domestic and socio-economic. The present generation of Africans have no lived experience of the 'good old days' about which they either read from novels and books or heard from stories told by the senior citizens. It was a time when it was inconceivable for an 'elder' or a 'titled person' to tell a lie, to act unjustly or to swear falsely. It was a time when the 'harmony of beings'² assured the survival of individuals and the community. It was a time when the saying "I am because we are"³ made sense in word and in deed. The 'good old days' represented a time when the leader of a community assured, through his character, way of life and leadership skills, the peaceful coexistence of the citizens and the health and security of the community. Unfortunately, the 'good old days' has become history. African peoples continue to have elders, titled persons (political and religious) and leaders but justice and peace is not yet a complete reality in Africa. This dysfunctional situation has become so endemic that one would need a

²This notion, according to H. Sindima, concerns the profound unity and solidarity of all realities. Cf. H. Sindima, "Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective" in C. Birch et.al. (eds), *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology* (MaryKnoll 1990) 144.

³Cf. J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford 1989) 106.

Jeremiah to speak to Africa in this manner: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; look around and take note! Search its squares and see if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks truth – so that I may pardon Jerusalem. Although they say 'As the Lord lives,' yet they swear falsely"⁴. Africa blossoms with the blessings of nature, enough to assure the wellbeing of its citizens and the peace of the continent, but these blessings have become the cause for conflicts, mismanagement and unpatriotic behaviour. Another oracle of Jeremiah holds true for what bad leadership has done to Africa:

Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no one lays it to heart (Jer 12:10-11).

The Synod was a grace-filled invitation to Africans to reflect on their situations in order to discover the path towards peace and well-being. The present paper responds to this invitation with a unique proposal. It develops the idea that in the New Testament, reconciliation brings about a change in human relationship with God, which enhances interpersonal relationships and human attitude to the natural world. The New Testament shows that the different conflicts that had plagued humanity in different parts of the globe have their remote cause in human relationship. This relationship extends to the political, religious, socio-economic and domestic spheres.

This paper is an exegetical and theological study of 2 Cor 5:14-21, a text that describes how the ministry of reconciliation could bear fruits of the new creation obtained through the death of Christ. The paper has five parts. It begins with a delimitation

⁴Jer 5:1-2

of the text of 2 Cor 5:14-21. Secondly, it undertakes a study of the terminology of reconciliation in Classical Greek Literature and in Paul, especially in 2 Cor 5:14-21. On the basis of the study of this text, the paper outlines, in Part Three, what it considers to be the ministry of reconciliation. Since the terminology is closely linked to the idea of new creation, the fourth part of the paper studies the African situation and explains how the ministry could bring about the well-being that Africa deserves and desires. Lastly, it outlines areas of pastoral concern for the Church.

1. Delimitation of the Text

2 Cor 5:14-21 belongs to the second of the six parts of the Second Letter to the Corinthians⁵. This second part of the letter includes 2 Cor 2:14-5:21. It is continuous with the first part of the letter (1:1-2:13) because with it Paul extends his personal apology by exposing grounds for his claim to be God's chosen minister of the new covenant. However, 2 Cor 2:14 marks the beginning of a new section because the thanksgiving there is considered as a second beginning to the letter, parallel to the initial benediction in 1:3-7⁶. This part opens with Paul picturing himself as a conquered slave of Christ whom God leads in a triumphal procession. This second part of the letter ends at 5:21 where the vocabulary of righteousness introduces the third part of the letter whose theme is the ministry of righteousness.

2 Cor 2:14-5:21 is a large section in which Paul introduces and defends the ministry of the New Covenant (2:14-

⁵Part 1 (1:1-2:13 - Personal Apology); Part 2 (2:14-5:21 - Ministry of the New Covenant); Part 3 (6:1-7:16 - Ministry of Righteousness); Part 4 (8:1-9:15 - Ministry of Generous Giving); Part 5 (10:1-13:13 - Paul's Defense of his Ministry).

⁶Cf. P. Barnett, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (TNICNT; Grand Rapids, MI 1997) 145-146.

4:6), further describes it as a ministry of hope and power even in the face of tribulation and death (4:7-5:10) and redefines it as the ministry of reconciliation (5:11-21). In describing the ministry of reconciliation (5:11-21), Paul gives reasons why the Corinthians should boast about him (vv11-13) but draws attention to both the motivation and direct results of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv14-21).

The text of 2 Cor 5:14-21 has the following structure:

- a. v14a: the love of Christ compels us (motivation)
- b. vv14b-15 the death of Christ
- c. vv16-17 New Creation (result 1)
- d. vv18-20 the ministry of reconciliation (result 2)
- e. v21 the death of Christ

According to this structure, statements on the death of Christ (b and e) envelop other statements on the direct result of that death, which are new creation and the ministry of reconciliation. This study draws out the meaning and implications of the new creation and the ministry of reconciliation. To do this satisfactorily, it begins with a description of related vocabulary.

2. Meaning of the *katalla,ssein* – *katallagh*, word group in 2 Cor 5:14-21

Philologically, the *καταλλάσσειν* – *καταλλαγή* word group is a compound form of *ἀλλάσσειν*, which is derived from a root meaning 'other' (*ἄλλος*), 'a making otherwise', 'a change of status'.⁷ The Greek term *καταλλάσσω* properly means 'to reconcile' or more specifically 'to change' from enmity to friend-

⁷Cf. W.H. Gloer, *An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Understanding of New Creation and Reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:14-21* (New York 1996) 91; J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation in Pauline Theology" in J. Flanagan – A. Robinson, *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie* (Claremont 1975) 157.

ship. The noun καταλλαγή, meaning 'reconciliation', denotes a change on the part of one party, induced by an action on the part of another⁸. The word is found in classical Greek where it describes the decisive act that sets aside hostility or estrangement and restores friendship. Still in classical Greek, it is used always in the passive voice, rarely in religious contexts but its use is primarily restricted to sociological and political spheres of life. The change that it effects is not basically psychological or emotional but a change in the relationship or situation vis-à-vis another⁹.

In the entire Bible, the verb appears five times and the noun four times in Rom 5:8-11 (2x) and in 2 Cor 5:14-21 (4x), but also in Col 1:21-22 (1x); and Eph 2:16 (1x). It is also found in its subordinate sense as reconciliation between human beings in 1 Cor 7:11; Rom 11:15 and in Matt 5:24 (διαλλάσσειν).

It becomes clear from the evidence above that in the entire Bible; in fact, of all the New Testament writers, Paul alone employs the καταλλάσσειν – καταλλαγή word group to describe the significance of the action of God in Jesus Christ¹⁰. Before Paul adopted the term, the word 'reconciliation' was found only in the secular sphere of classical Greek literature. It neither derived from any word in the Old Testament nor in Hellenistic religious language¹¹. The following paragraph studies the contexts in which the terminology appears in order to determine exactly what Paul's background is. The use of this terminology in Colossians and Ephesians are considered here in spite of the questions concerning their Pauline authorship.

⁸Cf. W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 932-934.

⁹W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 90; J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation", 157; F. Bachsel, "ἀλλάσσω κτλ", *TDNT* I, 251-259.

¹⁰W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 89.

¹¹J. Reumann, "Reconciliation", *IDB*, 728; J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation", 157.

2 Cor 5:14-21 speaks of the ministry of reconciliation which is the major phrase in the topic of this paper. Other aspects of the meaning of reconciliation in other Pauline texts will be referred to as we interpret this basic text. In this text, the verb καταλλάσσω appears in vv18, 19 and 20; and in vv 18 and 19, it is clearly stated that God reconciles...to himself. This implies that καταλλάσσω is a word for relationship. In 2 Cor 5:14-21 (also Rom 5:8-11), the two characters in relationship are God and human beings. As Paul uses the terminology, reconciliation happens especially within the God-human relationship where God is its subject. This God-human relationship is one of estrangement. The cause of the estrangement is human trespasses (v19), which is the outcome of a life for self and not for God (v15). Therefore, the offended party is God and the offender is humankind. Within this sphere of estranged relationship, the human being is described as hostile (ἐχθρος), impious (ἄσεβης), weak (ἀσθενής), and sinner (ἁμαρτωλός). Rom 5:6-8,10 use similar terms (weak, sinner, enemy) to describe the human being without God:

The theological implication of this Pauline use is thereby highlighted since God, the offended party, is the one who takes the initiative to reconcile us to himself. The language of reconciliation offers Paul the opportunity to explain the way in which God effected a fundamental change in the human being, "in [his] downtrodden, earth-oriented propensities...all in man that makes him close in on himself and refuse openness to the Spirit, to God and to his fellowman"¹². In the letter to the Romans, especially, Paul explains how human preoccupation with flesh causes the hostility and estrangement from God (8:5-8), exposing humankind to God's wrath (5:8-10; cf. also Col 1:21): "... the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law... and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:7-8).

¹²J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation", p.159.

The two texts exposed above show that although Paul borrowed the vocabulary of reconciliation from classical Greek literature, he uses it in an outstanding way. In classical Greek the word is used in four different ways¹³:

- a. It describes the work of a mediator to bring two warring parties back to friendship (active form).
- b. It describes a person's effort to persuade another to give up his anger (passive deponent form).
- c. It is used of an offended person who is persuaded to give up his anger, therefore, it describes the willingness to forgive (passive deponent form).
- d. It is used with a direct object to describe offenses concerning which reconciliation needs to be made (passive deponent form).

Paul's use of the verb fits none of the above categories. Rather, in all its occurrences, God is the subject of the verb *καταλλάσσω*¹⁴. In using the terminology, Paul retains its use in the sociological and political spheres of life, but he differs from classical Greek by using it only in the active sense. With this, Paul differs fundamentally from its passive use in classical Greek. Reconciliation is a process that begins with a positive response from the offended party. It is God who took the initiative to reconcile us through the death of his Son. Expressed in this way, Paul meant to underscore the initiative and gracious character of God's reconciling activity. Other phrases that underscore the gracious character of God's action are found in 2 Cor 5:19 "not counting their trespasses" and Rom 5:10 "while we were enemies".

¹³Cf. W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 93-94.

¹⁴The verb is also used in its active voice and it retains the same subject in Rom 5:10-11; 1 Cor 7:11; Col 1:20; and Eph 2:16. This use is unattested prior to Paul. Cf. Dunn, *Theology*, 228.

3. God's reconciling activity (2 Cor 5:14-17)

2 Cor 5:14-16: The death of Jesus is the means through which God reconciled humankind to himself. This idea is clearly supposed in vv14-15, but it is stated more explicitly in Rom 5:10: γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. God's response to human hostile actions towards him is self-immolation: the sacrifice of his only Son through death on the cross (v21). Different interpretations have been given as to how one should understand the death of Jesus for all (ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν)¹⁵. Depending on how the preposition ὑπὲρ is translated, scholars have interpreted Jesus' death either as substitution or representation¹⁶. A consideration of 2 Cor 5:14-21 alongside other Pauline texts, like Rom 5:12-21 and 1 Cor 15:20-23, 45-49, favors the representative function of Jesus and shows that 2 Cor 5:14-15 is "one of the most explicit expressions of Paul's understanding of Jesus' significance as representative man"¹⁷. The actions of the first and last Adam have universal significance. The sin of the first Adam is a yielding to the weakness of the flesh in which all share and the obedience of Christ is victory of human flesh in which all share. On the basis of the phrase "since we are convinced that

¹⁵ Jesus died for all could mean that (a) all are juridically regarded by God as having died; (b) all are potentially dead because Christ's death has made it possible for them to die to themselves; (c) individuals die with Christ in the context of baptism; (d) individuals either identify with Christ and die his death or fail to identify with him and die their own death. Each of these different interpretations fails to represent fully the force of Paul's idea, and each diminishes one aspect of what Paul said or the other. Cf. W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 33-34.

¹⁶ Linguistically, the preposition allows for both representative (on behalf of, for) and substitution (in place of, instead of) interpretations. Cf. W. Bauer, *A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago 1979) 838-839.

¹⁷ J.D.G. Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of the Death of Jesus" in R. Banks (ed.), *Reconciliation and Hope* (Exeter 1974) 130; W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 33-34. The idea of being dead with Christ and dead to sin forms part of the Pauline emphasis on dying and rising with Christ which is found throughout his writings. Cf. Rom 6; 7:1-6; Gal 2:19-20; 5:24-25; 6:14-15; Col 3:3.

one has died for all; therefore all have died" (v14), we may affirm with many other scholars¹⁸ that Paul moved beyond the idea of representation to that of participation. In the event of his death, therefore, Jesus did not act as substitute for others; his death did not merely produce certain benefits for others; it is rather an event in which the believer participates because he or she is incorporated into Christ. In dying with Christ, the believer dies to the flesh and to the power of sin¹⁹. Moreover, what Paul says in v21 adds impetus to the meaning of Jesus' death: "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

2 Cor 5:17: The result of God's reconciling activity in the death of Jesus is new creation or new creature (καινή κτίσις) and an insertion into a new realm of existence (ἐν Χριστῷ). The death of Jesus has basically changed the human situation by removing the basic inclination to the flesh, which makes the human being incapable (οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται – Rom 8:7) of pleasing God. Paul describes this new state in two ways. Firstly he explains it as a being "in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ). The human being is no longer an outsider in God's affairs (estranged). This way of presenting the new creation as life in Christ explains what we may also call incorporative elements. According to 2 Cor 5, Christ has died for us, and therefore we have died also in him (v14). Likewise we are raised and live with him (v15). The incorporation into Christ implies that the human being shares in the divine life, incorporated into the household of God (Eph 2:16-21). This new state signals the end of hostility that alienated humans from God, as Paul says: "the old has passed away, behold the new has come" (v17). Secondly, Paul

¹⁸Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York 1951) 297-298; W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London 1948) 242; D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of Paul* (Philadelphia 1964) 130-131; E. Käsemann, "The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul" in *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia 1969) 41.

¹⁹Cf. Rom 6:3-11; 7:4; Gal 2:19-20; 5:24; 6:14; Phil 3:10-11.

describes the new life in Christ with the language of justification: "...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (v21; cf. Rom 5:9)²⁰. Righteousness is a prerogative of God²¹, but God entrusts it to those who are called in Christ and who thereby become agents of salvation. Paul confirms this when he says in Rom 8:30 "...those whom he called he also justified".

In 2 Cor 5:18-19, therefore²², Paul introduces a new terminology, that of καταλλάσσειν, to say how the Christ-event has its origin from God and is the objective act of God for the world²³: τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ. God's gracious initiative to change the human condition and to make human beings capable of a relationship of communion and friendship is what Paul designates with the καταλλάσσειν – καταλλαγή word group.

The direct object of God's reconciling activity is rendered as 'us' (ἡμᾶς – v18) and 'the world' (κόσμον – v19), showing that it has both anthropological and cosmological dimensions. The phrasing of 2 Cor 5:18-19 provides the orientation for understanding how one of these dimensions is at the service of the other. In the first place, the direct result of the

²⁰Reconciliation is not synonymous with justification but there is a sense in which their meanings harmonize. The Christ event is the point of departure for both metaphors, that is, the death of Jesus through which the individual is incorporated into Christ. Justification explains this incorporation as the restoration of the individual into the covenant relationship, with Christ's death explained as the sacrifice of expiation (Rom 3:21-26). Reconciliation, on the other hand, explains the incorporation into Christ as the restoration of the Creator-creature relationship, with Christ's death explained as a dying to self in order to live for God. We could say that reconciliation provides the basic explanation for arguing for the justification of all, Jew and Gentile alike. Because of the fundamental change in human nature, all could have access to the covenant blessings without having to keep the Law.

²¹In Paul, God is always the subject of the noun δικαιοσύνη.

²²The particle δὲ is not intended to denote contrast; rather, it acts as a transitional term as Paul proceeds to explain that the Christ-event and its benefits for mankind has its origin in God.

²³Cf. W.H. Gloer, *Paul's Understanding*, 84-86.

death of Christ is the radical change that has occurred in humankind. However, this was in view of God's ultimate and greater plan for the entire creation – the reconciliation of the entire universe to himself. Another text, Col 1:20, helps to understand the word κόσμος (the world) in v19 as the universe of creation²⁴. In this text also, the object of God's reconciling activity is the created universe, all things in heaven and on earth. Consequently, we should understand 2 Cor 5:18-19 as saying that the new humanity born through the death of Christ is at the service of the reconciliation of the entire cosmos to God. We should recall that Paul makes the same argument in Rom 8:19-23, where he says that material creation, groaning in the bondage to decay because of human sinfulness, now shares in the hope that is born in the Christ-event. This is possible because creation yearns eagerly "for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19). We could therefore say that in both 2 Cor 5:18-19 and Rom 8:19-23 Paul views the anthropological dimension of reconciliation to be at the service of the cosmological dimension. How Paul says God intends to realize this ultimate purpose is the subject of the next paragraph.

4. The Ministry of Reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19)

By using the phrase τὰ δὲ πάντα (v18) Paul recalls all he had said in vv14-17, which describes what God has done to bring us to the grace in which we now stand. What Paul says further in vv18-19 concerns the activities of God that are contemporaneous with Paul's day and what God intends to do until he reconciles the entire world to himself. In order to say this Paul uses present participles. Each of the two verses (18 and 19) has two adjectival participles of which God is the subject, and with them Paul draws attention to two important ongoing divine activities: the ministry of reconciliation (v18) and the

²⁴Cf. J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation", 161.

word of reconciliation (v19). The sentences also identify the agent(s) through whom God intends to bring about his ultimate purpose for creation: ἡμᾶς (v18) and ἡμῖν (vv18 and 19). Here, the concept that sets the pace for the interpretation of these two verses is διακονία "...God who gives us the ministry of reconciliation (τοῦ θεοῦ ... δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς). This implies that what God has done for us in reconciling us to himself is an act of grace which calls us to service (διακονία). Expressed in the present participle, God's calling us to duty is contemporaneous with his having reconciled us to himself. This idea of mission is also underscored in other parts of the text with the following words: θέμενος "...entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (v19); πρεσβεύομεν "...so we are ambassadors (v20); γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ "...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (v21). These words and sentences speak of what we should do by reason of the reconciliation already obtained. As Fitzmyer rightly puts it:

The message of reconciliation is not an eschatological myth...It is actualized between the indicative of the gift of salvation and the imperative of the duties of salvation, i.e. in the historical realm, the realm of concrete daily life and corporal community. Cosmic peace does not settle over the world, as in a fairy tale. It takes root only in so far as men in the service of reconciliation confirm that they have themselves found peace with God²⁵.

Before we say what this ministry entails, it is important to identify the collaborators of God in this ministry of reconciliation. God's collaborators are identified as 'us': ἡμᾶς and ἡμῖν. The question scholars ask is if these refer to the same subject. If ἡμᾶς is parallel to ἡμῖν of vv18 and 19 this would seem to be a justifiable conclusion, but the case at hand appears to differ.

²⁵J. Fitzmyer, "Reconciliation", 170.

In the first place, ἡμᾶς refers to all humanity, who is the beneficiary of God's reconciling activity. What God has done in Christ has universal relevance. It is however doubtful if the ἡμῶν of vv18 and 19 also refers to all humanity. We must recall that Paul says that "not all have heard the gospel" and "not all have obeyed the good news" (Rom 10:16); some are still ignorant of the reconciling activity of God and some have not submitted to God's righteousness, those who live in selfishness, seeking to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:2-3). Therefore, ἡμᾶς is not parallel to ἡμῶν. While ἡμᾶς refers to all humanity, ἡμῶν, on the other hand, refers to believers who have actually died with Christ and who live the newness of life in the Spirit²⁶. These are the collaborators of God and to these agents of salvation, God has entrusted this ministry and work of reconciliation. What ever this ministry entails, the aim would be (1) for the benefit of the rest of humankind who do not yet believe and (2) for the entire creation²⁷. What is this ministry?

In order to describe this ministry, we must first redefine its orientation. Reconciliation initiates a movement that begins with God and ends with God. It is described as an action of God whose goal is God: "God reconciles ... to himself". God alone is the orientation and final destination of any activity in view of reconciliation. Every effort towards reconciliation must be geared to restoring the parties or party to God. This important note defines the course of action for the ministry of reconciliation.

The ministry of reconciliation entails (a) the "word of reconciliation" (...τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς - v19), (b) the "ministry of reconciliation" (τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς -

²⁶Majority of scholars distinguish the two objects in this way. Cf. for instance G.B. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids 1973) 137-138.

²⁷Cf. Rom 11:13-15.

v18) and by implication (c) other efforts against conflict and alienation in the world. It is both word and event.

(a) As word, reconciliation needs to be proclaimed, and as event, it needs to be lived out in concrete daily life. As the word of reconciliation, it is the heart of the gospel message. It has been entrusted to 'us', who have been called to proclaim it. As Paul says in 1 Thess 2:1-12 this message should be preached

- even in the face of opposition
- not out of deceit or from impure motives; not to please mortals but as God has revealed and entrusted it to us
- not with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed, and without becoming a burden to the congregation
- accompanied with a pure, blameless and upright conduct
- in gentleness and care, encouraging God's children to live lives worthy of God, and sharing with them not only the word but the life.

(b) Besides the call to preach the word of reconciliation, reconciliation also entails servanthood (*διακονία*). As servants of the reconciling activity of God, we have been called to become transparent imitators of Jesus in his death and resurrection and to become models of Christian life for others. The terminology of reconciliation speaks of change, that is, change in the attitude of those who benefit from the love of God, which has been made manifest in the event of Christ. It is a change from living for self to living for Christ. Until this change of attitude takes place, human beings are under condemnation (Rom 5:8-10; Col 1:2). As 2 Cor 5:14-15 shows, God's reconciling activity in Christ launches us into a new way of life that befits the new creation. The ministry requires that we truly identify ourselves with Christ's death and thereby reject attitudes that lead to self-glorification, selfishness and gratification of the body. We are called to live to the greater glory of God.

Reconciliation is God's means of changing persons in estranged relationship into persons capable of communion and friendship. Therefore, the servants of reconciliation should become teachers and formators, who engage in the formation of the character of other persons towards the completed growth in Christ. The text of Eph 4:11-13 could be cited here to clarify this aspect of the ministry:

^{NRS} **Ephesians 4:11** The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

This text clarifies that an important aspect of this ministry is the call to build up the body of Christ until all reach perfect maturity, which is incorporation into Christ. This involves restoring men and women to God's friendship and training them to acquire the character of Christ.

(c) Reconciliation should also extend to all efforts against conflicts and all forms of alienation in our world today. Through Christ, God has shown us that the right attitude towards peaceful resolution of conflicts is self-immolation. Reconciliation is the positive attitude of the offended party, which aims at changing the offender from inside out and which makes the offender capable of friendly and peaceful relationship. Ministers of reconciliation should educate towards the right attitude to reconciliation, which the event of Christ invites all human beings to embrace. Experience teaches us that an approach to reconciliation that begins with insistence to restore deprived rights does not yield the desired peace and justice.

5. Relevance for the future of Africa

Paul's teaching about reconciliation obviously calls for a change of attitude which we hope could provide the remedy to the alienation that plagues our society and institutions. At this juncture, I want to use this 'language of change' to address Africa's and the world's outcry for redemption. I look at Africa and I see a continent that seems to be under condemnation. I look at Africa and I see, if I may use the language of Rom 8:18-23, a creation that is subjected to futility, groaning in labor pains and waiting to be set free from its bondage to decay. I see an Africa that could experience redemption only when African Christians decide, through a change of attitude, to appropriate the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Signs of decay and bondage fill Africa because its citizens have not shown the change of attitude that befits the new creation.

Several areas of life yearn for change in Africa. Nevertheless, the need for change could become clear only from a good appreciation of how God has so richly blessed the African continent on the one hand, and when we consider, on the other hand, the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows and the life and death that characterize existence on the African soil. No one can present a uniform picture of what is African, but all Africa meet on one important plane, that is, that the entire African reality blossoms with blessings of nature.

Africa is the continent that has the highest potential to be the richest in the world because of her very large share of the world's mineral resources. There is a rich deposit of oil reserves in many African countries like Libya, Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Recently, oil reserves have been discovered in Ghana. Nigeria is the world's ninth largest oil producing country and she ranks fifth in natural gas resources. In fact, the size and wealth of Nigeria lend credence to her as Africa's prospect for a better tomorrow. South Africa,

Angola, Botswana, Sierra Leone and other African countries have reasonable deposits of diamond in the fields. In Sierra Leone, for instance, before the war that tore the nation apart, rural dwellers used to pick these precious stones from eroded sands after heavy rains. The list is inexhaustible. Besides the minerals, the continent produces economic crops like palm kernel, peanuts, cocoa, cotton and rubber, which have been in demand among the industrial nations of Europe and America. Moreover, Africa has an admirable high population of learned men and women in different fields of knowledge.

God has bestowed on Africa such very rich blessings so that through it Africans could experience fullness of life, peace, justice and harmony. However, behind the beauty of Africa lies an uncompromising character of ugliness, which has earned Africa the definition as the 'painful' part of the world. Life in today's Africa is characterized by various kinds of conflict in domestic, societal and national spheres. In many countries, it is tragedy without end for hundreds of thousands of defenceless and abandoned persons. Another terrible issue that has defied resolution is the caste system. For centuries, many families and clans in Africa have reeled from the trauma of social exclusion.

In the face of the conflicts and disorders that characterize Africa today, the citizenry is highly embittered. Many Africans ask for justice and restoration of deprived rights and since the legal systems cannot provide it; many have resorted to violence that expresses itself as robbery, kidnapping and bloodshed. Governments and leaders have been blamed for the poverty and destitution that stain the image of the continent, and for the violence and high mortality rate that her people experience. The oppressed peoples of Africa believe that their situations would change if their leaders and governments become more responsible, altruistic and patriotic. They consider that prosperity; justice and peace would become the order of the day if deprived rights were restored. Several institutions have tried at various times to find solutions to these problems but not much

success has been recorded so far. The beauty and the ugly becloud Africa, and both realities do not leave the African unaffected.

The call for change fills the air in Africa, but also in different parts of the world. Many slogans have been invented to underscore this global need. I identify two most famous of these slogans:

- a. "The Change We Need" is the catchphrase in the political campaign of Barrack Obama, the black American that has recently become the President of the most powerful country in the world. Barrack Obama is the son of a native Kenyan. On 20th January 2009, he was sworn in as the president of the United States of America. Knowing that this same country hosted the life and times of Dr. Martin Luther king (Jnr), when it was unimaginable for a black man to be considered a proper human being, how much more holding a top political position; it becomes apparent that the American society has changed a lot in human behavior and its attitude to racism and will continue to change. This American example is proof that a change in attitude could lead to a state of justice and peace in the world.
- b. "Aids is real" is a cliché that has come to stay with us. At this time when HIV/Aids is claiming the lives of millions of people and destroying the affection of many homes, the only cure that has been discovered is "a change of attitude", that is, only those who successfully change their way of life are assured of safety in the face of this rampaging killer.

In a very prophetic manner, these slogans express the world's need for change. Therefore, led by the Spirit or in the most providential way, the forthcoming Synod, by means of the theme of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, is addressing this world's need for change. Change, people say, is the only

thing that is constant in life. Ironically, human beings are more often than not resistant to change. Be that as it may, life will be most boring and uneventful without change. In fact it is only when there is change that there can be relevance in one's circle of influence because the world around us keeps changing with time. Our world has emerged out of the industrial age into the information age and is rapidly hurtling towards the imagination age. Individuals and societies stand in danger of deterioration and irrelevance if they fail to change in the face of changing situations and circumstances. Africa will continue to decay if its citizens fail to respond to her outcry for change. Most importantly, though worrisomely however is that the Church stands in danger of death if it will not change adequately to answer the questions that the seeking and changing world is asking. Presently, the Church recognizes various signs of decay that highlight the need for change in Africa.

Nevertheless we must note that though the need for change is this much, the greatest danger about change is to think that 'the change we need' will come with a change of government and leadership. 2 Cor 5:14-15 implies that justice, peace and harmony are not the direct results of the restitution of deprived rights. We must not think that the onus for change is only in the hands of leaders and those who take care of others in different capacities. The word "Reconciliation" is calling every human being to a change of attitude. Africans should listen to this summon to a change of attitude.

The problems of Africa, as described in the foregoing paragraphs, are possible only in societies where individuals adopt a selfish way of life. Institutions in African societies thrive on bribery and corruption. Many cases of conflict in families (divorce, violence, deprivation of rights and property, neglect of responsibility to children etc.) are possible especially because of selfishness. The unpatriotic attitudes of national and state leaders are attributed chiefly to the same cause. Selfish-

ness lies at the basis of various forms of discrimination and exploitation.

Today, the words of reconciliation address us. Paul connects the vocabulary of reconciliation to new creation because he sees in this terminology the pattern for solving the problem of selfishness, which causes injustice and violence in the world and for realizing a change of situation where justice and peace abide. Below are few suggestions on how we could more concretely live this change of attitude:

- a. We should believe the words of 2 Cor 5:17 "...The old has passed away, behold the new has come". The call is individual and communitarian. Therefore, we should consider that the Church is calling us to a new beginning, a new hope for Africa, whose realization is possible only if Africans return to God in total submission. Let us beg God to send us his Spirit so that he would remove our gaze from ourselves and direct it to God. It is a change from worship of self to the worship and praise of God.
- b. The change of attitude that reconciliation requires implies that we appreciate how richly God has blessed Africa as a whole. We are used to seeing only what has gone wrong with us, how our leaders have betrayed us, and what they must do to restore justice and peace. Our response to God must begin with praise for his blessings on Africa, our families, ourselves, our institutions. In our talking to God, praise should outweigh lament.
- c. Praise opens us up to responsibility. Reconciliation calls us to stand up to the challenges of the new humanity with its ethical and social (corporate) implications. The cause of the greatest problems of Africa is human attitude in relationship. Our families, institutions and nation are products of human attitude. This is why the call for a change of attitude is most necessary for a better Africa. The model of relationship is given in 2 Cor 5:14-21, and according to it, any action or attitude that revolves

around self and which does not promote the good of others is not the required one.

6. Conclusion: Pastoral Implications for the Church

In conclusion, I want to address the question of where the Church comes in, in considering the concept of change. Today, the Church has various challenges in the task of catalyzing change to meet the needs of today's hurting society. A Church that is led by the Spirit of God and which is willing to model what it preaches is required to control and channel the process of change for positive impact. In our own immediate environment these challenges are in the following areas:

- The first challenge is found in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is the particular manner in which the Church actualizes her mission as the sacrament of God's reconciling work in Christ. In order to be effectively an instrument of reconciliation, the celebration of this sacrament should incorporate the two aspects of this ministry, described in 2 Cor 5:18-19 as word and as ministry. In view of its description as Word, the celebration of this sacrament should be accompanied by proclamation and preaching of the God's message of reconciliation. As ministry, the power Jesus gave to his disciples to forgive sins (John 20:19-23; Matt 16:19; 18:18) should also be understood in a personal sense. This command invites followers of Jesus to imitate God by adopting an attitude of loving forgiveness before their fellows.
- Since the challenge is in the area of human behavior, integrity is needed so much in the lives of those whose work it is to show the way forward through this ministry of reconciliation. Ministers in the Church must therefore strive to become models of the word of God

which they preach. Integrity is trustworthiness. Without it Christian ministry is impossible.

- The Eucharist is the principal place for the proclamation and highest point of realisation of what is effected in the sacrament of reconciliation. Ministers should moreover encourage more devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and sustained catechism on the ethical implications of our belonging to a Eucharistic community.
- The aspect of Praise should be underscored at Liturgical gatherings. The consciousness of God's manifold blessings on Africa and local communities could be instilled into the people by making it an object of Praise at Liturgical gatherings.
- Priests and ministers should properly treat cases of Lament, not by simply condemning the offender but by studying and addressing the attitudes that lead to them.
- Fight against cultures that promote the oppression and exclusion of some members of the community from full participation in its life.
- Discourage people from brooding over the past, blaming colonialism and governments for the woes of Africa. Encourage them to look inwards in order to discover signs of decay in our environments which human selfishness and irresponsibility cause.