

**BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AS SOCIAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF
RECONSTRUCTIVE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE IN POST-COLONIAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

by

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Declaration

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I declare that BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AS SOCIAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF RECONSTRUCTIVE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE IN POST-COLONIAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Summary

The contribution of the Church to the reconstruction of a nation is the primary reason for the present study. The paradox image that the Democratic Republic of Congo presents deserves particular attention. With more than 80% of DRC population being Christians, this study strives to examine the current Christian religious discourse in the DRC and to see in what way this discourse can be ameliorated in order to play properly the role of facilitating a positive transformation of this country. Notwithstanding I have been alienated from the country for some years now, the study analyzes the current situation on the ground on the basis of the data available, and makes some recommendations in order for the situation in the DRC to be ameliorated. This study thus urges a reconstructive Christian religious discourse in the hope of changing the nation's mentality in order to reconstruct this beautiful Country.

Key terms:

Biblical interpretation; Church; Democratic Republic of Congo; Postcolonial;
Reconstruction theology; Religious discourse; Social discourse

List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

AACC: All Africa Conference of Churches

AD: In the Year of our Lord

ARC: Association des églises de Reveils au Congo (Re-awakening Churches association)

Acts: The Acts of Apostles

BC: Before Christ

BCE: Before the Common Era

CCS-DRC: Country Case Study-Democratic Republic of Congo

CNCO: Conférence Nationale Episcopale de la République Démocratique du Congo

(National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo)

CE: Common Era

Cor: Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians

Deut: Deuteronomy

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

ECC: Eglise du Christ au Congo (The Church of Christ in Congo)

Eph: Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

FCK: Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa (Catholic Faculties of Kinshasa)

He: The Epistle to the Hebrews

IMA: International Medical Aid

Jn: The Gospel According to John

JSOT: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

JSNT: Journal for the Study of the New Testament

LRA: The Lord Resistance Army

Matt: The Gospel According to Matthew

MIBA: Mining Company of Bakwanga

NRSV: New Revised Standard Version

NT: New Testament

OT: Old Testament

OTE: Old Testament Essays

RDP: Reconstruction Development Programme

Thess: Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WCC: The World Council of Churches

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Summary & Keywords.....	iii
Acronyms & Abbreviations.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background to the study.....	1
1.2 Motivation for the study.....	9
1.3 Aim, Hypothesis and Objectives of the study.....	10
1.4 Research Methodology.....	11
1.5 Definition of Keywords.....	12
1.5.1 Biblical Interpretation.....	12
1.5.2 Reconstruction.....	16
1.5.3 Social Discourse.....	18
1.5.4 Religious Discourse.....	19
1.5.5 Postcolonial.....	21
1.6 Limitations of the study.....	22
1.7 Outline of chapters.....	23

Chapter Two: Current Christian Religious Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.....	24
2.1 Introduction.....	24
2.2 Roman Catholic Church.....	25
2.2.1 Background.....	25
2.2.2 Beliefs about social issues.....	26
2.2.3 Evaluation.....	29
2.3 Protestant Church.....	30
2.3.1 Background.....	30
2.3.2 Beliefs about social issues.....	31
2.3.3 Evaluation.....	33
2.4 Kimbanguist Church.....	35
2.4.1 Background.....	35
2.4.2 The Kimbanguist Doctrine.....	37
2.4.3 Evaluation.....	39
2.5 Re-awakening Churches.....	40
2.5.1 Background.....	40
2.5.2 Beliefs about Social issues.....	42
2.5.3 Evaluation.....	43
2.6 Summary.....	44
Chapter Three: Reconstruction Theology Approach.....	47
3.1 Introduction.....	47
3.2 Reconstruction Theology: Background.....	47

3.3 Defining Reconstruction Theology.....	49
3.4 Theological Approach of Reconstruction.....	50
3.4.1 Kä Mana’s theological Approach to Reconstruction.....	50
3.4.2 Mugambi’s theological Approach of Reconstruction.....	55
3.4.3 Villa-Vicencio’s theological Approach of reconstruction.....	59
3.5 A Critical Assessment of Reconstruction Theology as proposed by Kä Mana, Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio.....	63
3.5.1 Similarities and Differences.....	64
3.5.2 Strengths and Weaknesses.....	64
3.6 What is Reconstruction Theology all about?.....	65
3.7 Summary.....	66
Chapter Four: Reading the Bible from a Reconstructive Religious Perspective.....	68
4.1 Introduction.....	68
4.2 Farisani’s reading of Ezra-Nehemiah.....	68
4.2.1 A Sociological Analysis of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.....	69
4.2.2 Ideology in the Ezra-Nehemiah.....	70
4.2.3 Reading Ezra-Nehemiah text against the grain.....	72
4.2.3.1 Ethnicity.....	72
4.2.3.2 Debt and Slavery.....	73
4.2.3.3 Women oppression.....	74
4.3 Farisani’s reading of Romans 12: 1-2.....	75
4.3.1 The text: Romans 12:1-2.....	75
4.3.2 Conformity and Transformation.....	76

4.4 Reading Romans 12: 1-2 from a Reconstructive Religious perspective.....	77
4.4.1 Justification of the choice of the text.....	77
4.4.2 A sociological analysis of the Epistle to the Romans.....	78
4.4.3 Ideology in Romans.....	81
4.4.4 Reading Roman’s text against the grain.....	82
4.4.5 Semantic analysis of Romans 12: 1-2.....	83
4.4.6 Theological Interpretation of Romans 12:1-2	86
4.4.7 Religious Contexts of Romans 12: 1-2.....	88
4.5 Reconstruction in the context of Romans 12: 1-2.....	92
4.6 Ethical Exhortation and Moral Formation in Early Christianity.....	93
4.6.1 The Ethical exhortation in the Early Christianity.....	93
4.6.2 Moral Formation in the Early Christianity.....	95
4.7 Summary.....	97
Chapter Five: Towards a Reconstructive Religious Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.....	99
5.1 Introduction.....	99
5.2 The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Current Christian Religious Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.....	99
5.3 Current Social challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo.....	102
5.3.1 Morality.....	102
5.3.2 Corruption.....	104
5.3.3 Violence.....	107
5.4 Theological analysis.....	110

5.5The Use of Reconstructive Religious Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.....	111
5.5.1 Its Nature and Realization.....	112
5.5.2 The value and strengths of Reconstructive Religious Discourse.....	113
5.5.3 The weaknesses and obstacles to its realization.....	113
5.6. Summary.....	114
Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	116
6.1 Introduction.....	116
6.2 Brief summary of the conclusions drawn.....	117
6.3 Evaluation.....	119
6.4 Conclusion.....	121
Bibliography.....	122

Chapter 1: Introduction

The potential and/or real contribution of the Church to the reconstruction of a nation is the reason behind the present investigation. Nevertheless, it would be an error to think that the Church could play this role everywhere in the same manner. The Church can contribute by the way of social projects such as: health centers, hospitals, education for social transformation, and so on. But the Church also can contribute through its religious discourse, which aims at moral renewal.

In this first chapter, I set out the problem under investigation, as well as the aim, objectives and hypothesis of the study. I also describe the methodology used, the limits of the study, and conclude with an outline of the chapters. But first, I provide a historical and sociopolitical review of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is the context behind this study. This chapter then should familiarize the reader with all the key concepts that are central to this study.

1.1 Background to the study

The Democratic Republic of Congo, a large country with immense economic resources, is potentially the wealthiest country in Africa. As Iyenda confirms, “Its regional importance with internal waterways and land links to nine states, makes the Democratic Republic of Congo a motor for potential regional growth as significant as Nigeria and South Africa.”¹ The country is endowed with fabulous natural resources, including copper, uranium, cobalt, silver, tin, cadmium, radium, petroleum, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, zinc, germanium, bauxite, iron ore, hydropower and timber.² The Democratic Republic of Congo has immense capacity for mining (diamonds, copper, zinc), mineral processing of consumer products (including textiles, footwear, cigarettes, processed foods and beverages), cement, and agricultural products (including coffee, sugar, palm oil, rubber, tea, quinine, cassava, bananas, root crops, corn, fruits and wood products).³

¹ Guillaume Iyenda, *Households' Livelihoods and Survival Strategies among Congolese Urban Poor: Alternatives to Western Approach to Development* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen., 2007), 3.

² Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaire to Democratic Republic of Congo: Current Issues 28* (Uppsala: Nordic African Institute, 2000), 4.

³ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaire to Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2.

The natural resources of the Congo had been characterized by the Belgian prospectors as a “veritable geological scandal.”⁴ The Congo River is the second biggest source of hydroelectric power in the world, after the Amazon. According to a 2003 survey, the Congo has a hydroelectric potential of 100,000 megawatts or 13% of the world’s total.⁵ It must be underlined that from this large hydroelectric resource, the exploitable potential is estimated at 774 GWh, i.e. 66% of central Africa’s potential, 35% of the whole continent’s potential and 8% of the world’s annual potential. But only 0.77% of its exploitative potential is being taken advantage of.⁶ Consequently there is still big demand in order to electrify the whole country and even in the Capital certain quarters are in the darkness.

However, this scandalous wealth of the country is exploited through greed and violence in a way that makes its inhabitants miserable.⁷ For example, Gecamines in the Katanga province and MIBA in the Kasai province are the two most important companies in the country. However, these societies are today run privately and do not work for the account of state and the benefit of the population. Another example, access to food has become one of the main indicators of the level of poverty within families. Trefon correctly argues that “approximately 50% of Kinshasa (the inhabitants of Kinshasa), eat only one meal per day and 25% eat only one meal every two days. The main meal is usually eaten in the late afternoon.”⁸ Thus, the problem is not the availability of food in the market, but rather the lack of resources to buy food. In a nutshell, “the vast majority of households in the Capital of Kinshasa, have less than \$50 per month, and the average life expectancy for Congolese in general is under 50.”⁹

The result is clear: international organizations have declared the Congo “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.”¹⁰

⁴ Osita G. Afoaku, *Explaining the Failure of Democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Autocracy and Dissent in an Ambivalent World. African Studies* 76 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2005) , 2.

⁵ Afoaku, *Explaining the Failure of Democracy in the DRC*, 2.

⁶ *Citizens’ voice and Accountability Democratic Republic of Congo Country Case Study. Final Report-March 2008* (cited from the online version: <http://www.drisconsult.eu/> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁷ Writing from South Africa, Boesak confirms this phenomenon when he refers to “the greed and rapaciousness of the new power elite in independent and liberated countries whose hunger for power and wealth completely gobbled up the people’s hunger for freedom, justice and food.” (Aubrey A. Boesak. “*African Renaissance and Spirituality.*” *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies-Multi-Inter-and Transdisciplinarity*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (2006), 175)

⁸ Theodore Trefon (ed.), *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People respond to State Failure in Kinshasa* (London: Zed Books, 2004) , 3.

⁹ Trefon, *Reinventing Order in the Congo*, 4.

¹⁰ See Heidi Kingstone, “*Eden of the Forgotten People.*” *The Sunday Independent* (03 August 2008) , 16. (cited from the online version: <http://www.heidikingstone.com/articles/pdf/congoScana...> accessed on 17 June 2009).

In 2006 unemployment was very high, above 40%, and the percentage of population in employment was only 2%.¹¹ As result, the country was in 168th place out of 177 in the 2005 classification of human development.¹² With regard to education, “for many years now, students have had to pay all tuition fees and since 1994, professors have been paid by parent’s contribution, schools and tuition are fixed in US\$, even in public schools.”¹³ Obviously, this suffering of Congolese people has its roots in the country’s colonial history. But problems persist into the post-colonial era as well. The social, political and economic context of the Democratic Republic of Congo has changed dramatically over the past two decades, resulting in political instability, mismanagement, corruption, immorality, violence and war¹⁴. As a result the social, political, and economic problems of the Democratic Republic of Congo impede its reconstruction and social development in spite of the country’s scandalous riches and progressive political rhetoric.

In my opinion, I think there is a problem of political leadership of course, but also a problem of ‘morality’ which poses with acuteness. For instance, “Corruption, theft, extortion, collusion, embezzlement, fraud or prostitution” have become normal “means deployed to survive.”¹⁵ I concur with Jackson that “if the Church sits back and refuses to intervene in the world’s affairs, there is no hope for the future.”¹⁶ The Church clearly has a great role to play in this situation, and the Spirit of God that transforms men and women can empower them to embark on the process of transformation of Congolese society.

The Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo pays attention to social issues. But this discourse in my opinion remains largely theoretical while, at the same time, it is not practically popularized among the masses. This study seeks to address these shortcomings of current Congolese Christian discourse in order to render it capable of becoming an effective weapon of the change in this country.

¹¹ (Cited from the online version: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economie_de_la_Republique_du_Congo accessed on 25 June 2010).

¹² 2005 *Human Development Index in the World Report on Human Development, 2006/2008, The fight against climate change: an imperative of human solidarity in a divided world, 2007/2008.*

¹³ Iyenda, *Household’s Livelihoods*, 126.

¹⁴ According to *Transparency International’s 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index*, the Democratic Republic of Congo is ranked 156th out of 163 countries (*Transparency International cited from the online version* :<http://www.transparency.org> accessed on 25 June 2010).

¹⁵ Trefon, *Reinventing Order in the Congo*, 10.

¹⁶ Winston Jackson, “*Biblical Reflections on Liberation and Reconciliation from the South African Experience.*” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol.4, No.2 (December 2001), 3.

Departing from the strengths and the weaknesses of the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the study investigates the possibility of this discourse's capacity to play a significant role in the context of reconstruction and social development of this country.

The reconstructive religious discourse envisaged in this study is a Christian, social and biblically informed. By 'Christian' I mean that it is action undertaken by the Church. The latter has a responsibility to restore justice and affirm human dignity, as well as to turn people away from the greed of domination and exploitation, with the goal of deconstructing all evil in human beings in order to construct a new society.¹⁷ Christian discourse is a liberator discourse based on a profound encounter between a person or people and Jesus Christ.¹⁸ The ideals and principles by which its goals are achieved are responsibly derived from the Bible as will be demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

By 'social' I seek to emphasize that this reconstructive Christian discourse needs to be aimed at improving people's living conditions for the welfare of all members of a community or society.¹⁹ And by 'religious' I recognize that it is produced by an institution with a special place in society. There is no evading the challenges that come with the reality of the Church being an institution. For this reason, careful and reflexive reflection on the possibilities that exist in this regard is imperative if the Church is to rise above other human institutions in order to serve as their conscience and supreme role model.

Because biblical interpretation is so important for the Church's self-understanding and mission, the specific contribution of this study will be in this area. It will be argued that what Christians understand the message of the Bible to be and how they go about contextualizing it are critical issues with immense consequences for societies such as the Democratic Republic of Congo where the Bible is quite highly regarded.

Therefore, the understanding of the biblical message is very important for the Church because as Mbiti asserts:

¹⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

¹⁸ Kä Mana, *Foi Chrétienne, Crise Africaine et Reconstruction de l'Afrique* (Lomé: C.E.T.A./Clé, 1992), 42.

¹⁹ J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd Edition, Vol. 13 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 907.

“the Bible is playing a crucial role not only in preaching, but also in shaping of Christian life.”²⁰ This raises the hermeneutical question of how to make sure that the message of the Bible is properly understood and properly applied to specific social problems.²¹

There are many problems in the Democratic Republic of Congo today, and they cover all aspects of life. For example, before 1980, the Democratic Republic of Congo was the world’s largest producer of cobalt, the second largest producer of industrial diamonds, the fourth largest producer of copper, and was among the three major suppliers of strategic minerals in the twenty-first century.²² However, political instability increased by the introduction of the so-called democracy since 1990, and the mismanagement of the country’s infrastructure, have had a very negative impact on the country. Consequently, today the Democratic Republic of Congo is regularly found at the bottom of the league table in terms of good governance, transparency and respect for human rights, as well as in terms of all the other, more general, indicators of development.²³ It must be reiterated that the problem exists not because the country is poor. Rather “the wealth which derived from these resources is very considerable, but too often it brings few benefits to local people or the wider society.”²⁴

In 1993 Kankwenda published a book in which he critically reviews the political and social situation of Mobutu’s Zaïre. He concludes that “the country presents a paradox image” which is characterized by “the simultaneous coexistence of immense potential wealth and abject poverty.”²⁵ Not long ago, Trefon wrote an interesting book in which he laments the reality that “people are poor, sick, hungry, unschooled, under-informed and disillusioned by the decades of oppression, economic crisis and war.

Outbreaks of violence have reached frightening proportions.”²⁶ In matter of fact, very little has changed with regard to this state of affairs even in present-day Democratic Republic Congo.

²⁰ John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Theology* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 62.

²¹ William McCure King, “*The Biblical Base of Social Gospel*,” Pp.57-64 in *The Bible and Social Reform*. Edited by Ernest R. Sanden (California: Scholars Press, 1982).

²² Afoaku, *Explaining the Failure of Democracy in the DRC*, 2.

²³ Citizens’ voice and Accountability Democratic Republic of Congo Country Case Study: Final Report-March 2008 (cited from the online version: <http://www.drisconsult.eu/> accessed on 25 June 2010).

²⁴ James Midgley, *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (London: Sage, 1995), 6.

²⁵ Kankwenda Mbaya, *Zaïre, what destiny?* (Chapenham: CODESRIA, 1993), 319 (see also Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in the Congo* (London: Fourth State, 2000), 10.

²⁶ Trefon, *Reinventing Order in the Congo*, 1.

Recently, in its final Report of March 2008, the Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Democratic Republic of Congo Country Case Study correctly described this situation in the following terms:

The mismanagement of the natural resources and a succession of wars have led to an overall deterioration of the socioeconomic situation of the country, with the dilapidation of its basic economic and social infrastructures, the shrinkage of the formal private sector, losses of millions of human lives, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, a general lowering of the standard of living of the population, and the emergence and development of the activities by the civil society organizations to ensure the survival of the population following the abandonment by the state of its essential public service responsibilities. Consequently, DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world, a situation which is in contrast with the enormous potential of its human and natural resources.²⁷

As result the economy is dominated by the informal sector which is characterized by low wages and non-existent social protection. The social conditions of in the population in the Democratic Republic of Congo are characterized by continuous deterioration. For example access to potable water (within less than 500 meters) is 17% in 2006, and Human Poverty Index is 71.34 the same year and the GDP per capita 143,5US\$ in 2008.²⁸ According to UNICEF, the total Congolese population was 60.644 million in 2006²⁹, 64.7 million in 2007 (UN, 2008)³⁰ and 70.916,439 million in 2010 according to Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia.³¹ The population is growing rapidly in this country and nearly 400 ethnic groups coexist in the country.

The capital city, as Iyenda notes "has a population exceeding six million, while a UN forecast suggested that the population of Democratic Republic of Congo, which was estimated at 42,2million in 1994, will increase to 104,5 million by 2025."³²

In this population, the rate of literacy was estimated at 65,3% in 2003.³³ All these facts and figures reveal that the country is in a profound crisis that affects all sectors of national life.

²⁷ Citizens' Voice and Accountability Democratic Republic of Congo Country Case Study: Final Report-March 2008 (cited from the online version: <http://www.driscensult.eu/> accessed on 25 June 2010).

²⁸ Seraphin Kasemuana, *Energy Systems: Vulnerability-Adaptation-Resilience Democratic Republic of Congo*. (cited from the online version: <http://www.helio-international.org> accessed on 25 June 2010).

²⁹ UNICEF-Congo DRC-Statistics (cited from the online version: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo_48662.html accessed on 24 October 2009).

³⁰ BBC News Africa Country Profiles: DRC (cited from the online version: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm accessed on 24 October 2009).

³¹ Democratic Republic of Congo-Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia (Cited from the online version: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo accessed on 19 November 2010).

³² Iyenda, *Households' livelihoods*, 4.

It is worth noting that the predation of the Democratic Republic of Congo can be traced back to the Belgian colonization. Hochschild in his book *King Leopold's Ghost* explained how King Leopold II with his Force Public had exploited the natural resources of the Congo (rubber and ivory) for himself by subjecting the Congolese to hard labour with no wages. He notes further that King Leopold II, several times referred to himself as the Congo's proprietor.³⁴ Leopold could spend millions of francs into promenade.³⁵

On 30 June 1960, the Democratic Republic of Congo obtained its independence from Belgium. It must be noted that the Belgians practically did nothing to pave the way for the independence of the Congo that in 1955 was expected to be decade off.³⁶ It was after several negotiations that the conference held in Brussels in January 1960 drew up a preliminary constitution for an independent Congo agreed to by both parties³⁷.

On 24 November 1965, Joseph Desire Mobutu, through a military coup, removed the first president of the Republic, Joseph Kas-Vubu. He changed the country's name to Zaïre and ruled the country for 32 years. Laurent Desire Kabila ousted Mobutu in May 1997, and then renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was assassinated in January 2001, and power was transferred to his son, Joseph Kabila, who obtained the mandate to rule the country after the elections in 2006.

Some scholars have found that there exists a similarity between King Leopold II (1885-1908) and Mobutu (1965-1997) with regard to the manner in which both have exploited the Congo. Wrong, for example, explicitly describes it as follows:

Both leaders were to prove remarkably adept at squeezing loans out of gullible creditors and luring private investors with a taste for adventure to Africa. Both covered their tracks with a system of fraudulent book-keeping. Both indulged in similar stratagems in an attempt to cheat the taxman after their deaths and both, having feathered their own nests, left Congo with a heavy burden of debts to be settled after they quit the scene.³⁸

³³ Nzongola, *From Zaïre to Democratic Republic of Congo*, 4.

³⁴ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), 87,

³⁵ Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 168.

³⁶ Wrong, *In the Footsteps*, 50.

³⁷ Muamba-Ntomolo, *Authoritarian Rule and National Development: A case Study of the Dilemma of Development in Zaïre*. (Ph D Thesis: University of Albany, 1980), 433.

³⁸ Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, 47-48.

What is painful in this quotation is the fact that Mobutu's predation has remained seriously engraved in the Congolese's memory. According to a 1992 World Bank study, 64.7% of Zaïre budget was reserved for Mobutu to spend at his discretion.³⁹ Many Congolese feel that the quality of life during colonization in spite of terror was better than the Zaïre ruled by Mobutu during the years 1990s. Schatzberg confirms, "Corruption, impunity, and political clientelism penetrated all fields of life in the Congo under Mobutu and Kabila". He goes on to argue that "Corruption of course is universal, but in Zaïre it pervades every aspect of life and permeates practically all transactions."⁴⁰

There is thus every reason for carrying out a study of the present nature on the Democratic Republic of Congo. For one thing, the country is generally regarded as a bad example in terms of governance. Dictatorship, armed conflicts, violence and corruption have made a mockery of all the indicators. The Congo is known as a country with a long history of human rights violations. Nevertheless, the causes of this plight can accordingly be traced back to Leopold II's regime of terror, following to the 32 years of Mobutu's rule, and the stalemate of the two Kabila regimes, which resulted in a crisis in vital sectors of national life. As a result the Democratic Republic of Congo is found at the bottom and classified fifth among the 20 worst states by "Failed States Index 2009" of Foreign Policy.⁴¹

In view of this deplorable situation, this research reflects on how the Christian religious discourse in existence in the Democratic Republic of Congo may facilitate a positive transformation of this situation. I agree with Swart that Churches could play a meaningful role, especially in the field of moral reconstruction, through a Christian religious discourse.⁴² Indeed, the Church can play this role in several levels. As Biggar argues "the Church can play this role by making social praxis, which is in supporting communities in their struggle

³⁹ Andre Bourque and Peter Sampson, *The European Union's Political and Development Response to the Democratic Republic of Congo* (Maastricht: European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2001), 2.

⁴⁰ Michael G. Schatzberg, *Mobutu or chaos? The United States and Zaïre, 1960-1990* (London: University Press of America, 1991), 38.

⁴¹ Failed State-Wikipedia, *the free Encyclopedia* (cited from the online version: <http://www.cdi.org/issues/failedstates/index.html> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴² Ignatius Swart, *The Churches and Development Debate: The Promise of a Fourth Generation Approach*. (Ph D Thesis: University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 158.

forsocial justice, regardless of their religious convictions.”⁴³ The Church has no other alternative than to be involved in the process of transformation of society.

Christian religious discourse as a public theology, which is a commitment to the public sphere, will concretely and decisively deal with concrete problems of society in order to contribute to their solution.⁴⁴

1.2 Motivation for the study

It will be shown in chapter 2 that, although according to the Constitution the Democratic Republic Congo is a secular state, the place occupied by religion (and therefore by religious discourse) within Congolese society is critical. And sacred texts like the Bible are foundational to Christian religious discourse. Even if there is no agreement concerning the number or extent of religious affiliation in the Democratic Republic Congo, all critics accept that the population is overwhelmingly Christian. For instance, according to Nzongola-Ntalaja, there are five religious denominations: Roman Catholics (50%), Protestants (20%), Kimbanguists (10%), Muslims (10%), and other Syncretist sects, and Indigenous religions (10%).⁴⁵

Focusing on the Bible is unavoidable given the reality that over 80% of the Congolese population is estimated to be Christian, and therefore under the Bible’s direct influence. The above-mentioned statistics further intimate the potential impact of Christian religious communities within Congolese society. However, the Democratic Republic of Congo’s problems seem colossal in spite of this high percentage of Christians. Where is a visible Christian contribution to the search of a solution to the problems of this country? Very few, if any projects have focussed specifically on how and to what extent does the Church contribute to the transformation and social development of this country.

⁴³ Nigel Biggar, “The Churches” *Witness in Evangelism and Social Praxis*” Pp. 439-451 in *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church*. Edited by William R. Barr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁴⁴ Rudolf von Sinner, *Towards a Theology of Citizenship as Public Theology in Brazil*. *Religion & Theology* 16 (2009): 181—206.

⁴⁵ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaïre to Democratic Republic of Congo: Current, 2*. Compare with slightly different but broadly in agreement estimates from World Vision, *Country Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo*. (cited from the online version: www.worldvision.org accessed on 24 March 2009) and from David B. Barret et al. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World. Vol.1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221.

For this reason, I want through this study to proceed with an analysis of the Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and from its strengths and weakness to explore ways to improve this discourse in order to render it a powerful weapon capable of effecting real and lasting change in my beloved country.

1.3 Aim, Hypothesis and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to improve the Christian religious discourse in the context of reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The question being asked is: How could the current Congolese Christian religious discourse be ameliorated in order to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction and social development of post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo? The study is built on the hypothesis that a reconstructive religious discourse is necessary and has a meaningful role to play in post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo.

Consequently, the objectives of this study are twofold. First, the study seeks to describe, analyze and evaluate the current Congolese Christian discourse from social, economic and political perspectives. This will be followed by an exegesis of Romans 12:1-2 done with reconstructive theology's concerns in mind. The exercise is undertaken in order to see if the Congolese Christian community can learn anything from the dynamics of Christians in the Graeco-Roman society, that is, if the lessons learned from the text can serve as resources for a Christian reconstructive discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The relevance of this study is that in a troubled country such as the Democratic Republic of Congo where the majority of youth and educated professionals elect to leave their country and go abroad in order to achieve a better quality of life, any intervention that will facilitate moral reconstruction and social revitalization is urgently needed. This study of reconstructive religious discourse hopes to play such a role. This is the reason why we will provide a detailed overview of the social, political and economic situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo in order thereafter to explore how Christian religious discourse might function constructively in this situation.

I am not convinced that current Congolese Christian religious discourse serves Congolese society optimally. Much of the Church is inward-looking, with focus increasingly shifting

away from broader community to individuals and immediate relatives. Even where there are social projects by Christian organizations, there is inadequate analysis of and reflection on the situation and its implications for the various aspects of society. Reconstructive religious discourse seems to be the best vehicle for achieving the goals of this study since it marries social concern with religious discourse which in this case is Christian. The result is a conversation that appeals to all levels of society because of its socio-political analysis alongside its Christian values.

1.4 Research Methodology

Methodology refers to the way through which the researcher achieves the objectives of his/her study. There are, however, a variety of research methods in each field of study. As Ragin states, “the problem is not to show which methodology is best, but rather to explore alternative ways to establish a meaningful dialogue between ideas and evidence.”⁴⁶ However, it is clear that this study will be a qualitative one. This means that it is not conceived in probabilistic terms or according to probabilistic relationships (quantitative research), but tends to look at cases as a whole and compare them with each other. Hence, in this study, I will use the comparative method.

Radcliffe-Brown affirms that the comparative research method is “a method by which we seek not to ‘explain’ but to understand a particular feature of a particular society by first seeing it as a particular instance of a general kind or class, or preferably a universal tendency in human societies.”⁴⁷ Within biblical studies, Holter thinks of “a comparative methodology that facilitates a parallel interpretation of certain Old Testament [and New Testament] texts or motifs and supposed African parallels, letting the two illuminate one another.”⁴⁸

West offers the logic for African biblical hermeneutics’ preference for the comparative approach: “African biblical interpretation is deeply rooted in an explicit methodological commitment that links both life interests and interpretive interests, and the way in which it

⁴⁶ Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), viii.

⁴⁷ A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, “*The Comparative Method in Social Anthropology*.” Pp. 193-208 in *Comparative Method in Social Sciences*. Edited by Alan Sica and Julie Pelton (London/Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006).

does it is by adopting a comparative approach.”⁴⁹ Recalling Holter, West affirms that “what African biblical scholars tried to do was to identify similarities between biblical words and African religio-cultural practices and to use their scholarly and scientific tools to show the relationship between African traditional religion and Christianity.”⁵⁰ He goes on to affirm that the comparative paradigm, also claims to understand what African biblical scholars are hoping to achieve, and understands the similarities and differences between what they and their Euro-American colleagues are doing.⁵¹ In connection with this, Ukpong argues that the comparative approach is always evaluative, because it seeks to evaluate elements of African culture, religion, beliefs, concepts and practices in light of the biblical witness, in order to arrive at a Christian understanding of them and determine their value for the Christian witness.”⁵²

In this study, in order to obtain an exact understanding of religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I will use the comparative method to describe, analyze and evaluate the elements of different current Christian discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The comparison will bring out their similarities and differences in relation to the criteria of comparison which, in the context of this study, are beliefs about social issues and practices. In addition, this method will enable us to compare the approaches chosen by the three African reconstructionists, namely, Kä Mana, Jesse Mugambi and Charles Villa-Vicencio. I will also use the comparative method to facilitate a parallel interpretation of the text of Romans, and to see how each interpretation relates to the others, with a view to obtaining a clear understanding of the text.

1.5 Definition of Keywords

1.5.1 Biblical Interpretation

Though it is the word of God, the Bible was written in human language, in a historical context, and is addressed to us through human writers, with all the accompanying anthropological and sociological implications.

⁴⁸ Gerald West (ed.), “*Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm in Africa Biblical Scholarship*.” Pp. 37-64 in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue: In quest for a shared Meaning*. Edited by Hans de Wit and Gerald West (Leiden/London: Brill, 2008), 37.

⁴⁹ West, “*Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm*”, 47.

⁵⁰ West, “*Shifting Perspectives*”, 48-72.

⁵¹ West, “*Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm*”, 37.

⁵² For this quotation see West “*Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm*”, 47.

As such, it needs to be interpreted in order to understand its meaning. The interpretation of the Bible can be a difficult task, since alongside the texts that are clear, there are also difficult passages that need to be interpreted. Acts 8:30-35 is a good example of why a biblical text needs to be interpreted. This text is a poem drawn from the text of Isaiah 53 and it speaks about a servant of the Lord, unjustly condemned, who by his sufferings repairs the sins of the whole humanity. The Ethiopian eunuch was tempted to read it as history whereas it is not that.

According to Berkhof, the science that teaches us the principles, laws and methods of interpretation is ‘hermeneutics’. This term is derived from the Greek word *hermeneutike*, which means “to interpret.”⁵³ Berkhof further states that the first attempt at a scientific treatment of hermeneutics was made by Flacius Illyricus in 1567 A.D.. Even the Palestinian Jews, who had a profound respect for the Bible as the infallible word of God, had already identified the interpretation of the law as their main objective. They distinguished, for instance, between the literal sense of the Bible and its exposition or exegesis.⁵⁴

However, the foundation of theoretical hermeneutics as a modern discipline occurred only with the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher over the thirty years of the Nineteenth Century.⁵⁵ Thiselton recognizes that writers often speak loosely of someone’s ‘hermeneutics’ when they refer only to how they go about the task (searching for the meaning of the text) rather than their reason for doing so. For him, hermeneutics entails critical reflection on the nature of the understanding of human actions, sign systems, visual data, institutions, artifacts or other aspects of life.⁵⁶ In this view, hermeneutics permeates all of life’s domains. Therefore, hermeneutics cannot be a static endeavour.

For Porter and Clarke, the two terms ‘interpretation’ and ‘hermeneutics’ are often synonymous and could refer to an intellectual discovery based upon reflection, observation,

⁵³ Louis D. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Sacred Hermeneutics)*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 11.

⁵⁴ Berkhof, *Principles*, 14-15.

⁵⁵ See Antony C. Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works and New Essays of Antony Thiselton* (Grand Rapids: Ashgate, 2006), 17.

⁵⁶ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 17.

examination and development of methods or principles that aid one to discovering the sense and meaning of a text.⁵⁷

In the African context, many African scholars today, especially South African scholars, are renowned for what is known as “contextual hermeneutics”. The contextual approach accepts that “all readings are contextual, that is, they are written within specific cultural, social and historical contexts. It is hermeneutics that involves engagement in the practical issues of society, with the social, cultural, political, economic and religious realities of the interpretive community.”⁵⁸ For Mosala for example a biblical hermeneutics of black theology must begin with a critical appreciation of the history, culture and ideological stance of oppressor, and then to address the question of material conditions that constitute the site of the struggle.⁵⁹ It is possible therefore to agree with Tombs that “authentic interpretation of the Bible today primarily means: engaging with the people in interpreting the real life issues they are facing and not studying the text solely for scholarly interests.”⁶⁰

Being contextual means acknowledging our presuppositions as we engage in biblical interpretation. Whether they are aware of it or not, people approach the Bible from different standpoints. As Rudolph Bultmann argues, there is no exegesis without presuppositions.⁶¹

In a similar vein, West correctly notes that “all interpreters come to the bible (or any text) with two sets of interests, what Stephen Fowl calls ‘interpretive interests’ and ‘life interests’. [Fowl] argues that interpretive interests are those dimensions of texts that are of interest to the interpreter, while life interests are those concerns and commitments that drive or motivate the interpreter to come to the text.”⁶²

⁵⁷ Stanley, E. Porter and Kent, D. Clarke (eds.), *What is Exegesis? An Analysis of Various Definitions.*” Pp.3-23 in *Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 4-5.

⁵⁸ Justin S. Ukpong, “Contextual Hermeneutics: Challenges and Possibilities.” Pp.22-55 in *Texts and Contexts in the New Testament Hermeneutics*. Edited by JNK Mugambi and Johannes A. Smit (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004).

⁵⁹ Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* (Ph D Thesis: University of Cape Town, 1987),xix.

⁶⁰ David Tombs (ed.), “The Hermeneutics of Liberation.” in *Approach to the New Testament Study*. JSNT/Sup. Series 120. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 310-355.

⁶¹ Rudolph, K. Bultmann and James, C. Greig (eds.), *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 252.

⁶² Gerald West, “Shifting Perspectives on the Comparative Paradigm: South African Biblical Scholarship.” *Religion &Theology: A journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse* 12 (2005): 48-72.

West goes on to argue that “African biblical interpretation has been dominated by historical and sociological interests.”⁶³ That means that in their reading of the Bible, these African scholars are interested in the historical and sociological dimensions of the text. A prominent example of this view is the renowned South African scholar Itumeleng Mosala.⁶⁴ Another case in point is Takatso Mofokeng who observed that in the South African context, during the Apartheid era, the Bible was both a problem and a solution. It is a problem when it is used by white Christians as a tool for oppression, and a solution when the same Bible is used by black Christians as a weapon for their struggle for liberation.⁶⁵

Given this flexibility of the Bible in the hands of its interpreters, some scholars believe in the Bible in its entirety, while others reject parts of the Bible (e.g. they regard the Old Testament to be irrelevant and outdated). Others still, while believing in the Bible, want aspects of it to be re-written according to their presuppositions. In addition to African and contextual hermeneutics, feminist biblical scholarship also supplies many examples of these variations. The feminist approach claims that the Bible has been used by some readers to justify the oppression of women. In a nutshell, their contention is that “the Gospel accounts are written from a male perspective. According to this approach, if the Bible is to be understood correctly, it must be considered from a cultural context.”⁶⁶ Schüssler-Fiorenza’s approach to the New Testament is a reaction to this, and represents an attempt to reclaim the Bible for women.

Similarly, for some African theologians, the Bible must be re-written in such a way that it will be relevant to Africans in their context, in order to integrate the message of the Bible into the African culture.⁶⁷ All this notwithstanding, I agree with Maluleke that we need to observe and analyze the manner in which African Christians read and view the Bible.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that in order to avoid the misinterpretation of a biblical text, the following principles need to be observed as a framework for interpreting the Bible:

⁶³ West, “*Shifting Perspectives*”, 49.

⁶⁴ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 49.

⁶⁵ Takatso A. Mofokeng, “*Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation.*” *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*. Vol. 2, No.1 (May 1988): 34-42.

⁶⁶ E. Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christians Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 29.

⁶⁷ Cnaan S. Banana, “*The Case of a New Bible.*” Pp. 12-22 in “*Rewriting the Bible*” *The Real Issues: Perspectives from Within Biblical and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe*. Edited by Isabel Mukonyora, James L. Cox, and Frans J. Verstraelen (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “*Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-first Century*”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 4-23.

- 1) All interpreters come to the Bible with pre-understandings/presuppositions. Bultmann reminds us that when we approach the sacred text, we carry with us an already established understanding of many issues in the text.⁶⁹
- 2) The meaning of a biblical text is a result of the interaction between text and interpreter, the principle known as the ‘hermeneutical circle’.⁷⁰ Consequently, the interpreter must consciously bring his/her cultural perspective/interests to his/her interaction with the text.
- 3) The interpreter must accept that the Bible as a whole (both Old and New Testament) is the word of God.
- 4) Since the meaning of a biblical text is a result of the interaction of text and interpreter, both the Bible and the interpreter are therefore affected by this interaction.⁷¹

The point here is that, the presuppositions are unavoidable in the process of biblical interpretation. Nevertheless, the interpreter must manage his/her presuppositions when he/she is doing biblical interpretation.

1.5.2 Reconstruction

In general, reconstruction may be defined as a process by which one rebuilds something that has been destroyed. The book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament provides an excellent example of this, and the call of (Nehemiah 2:18) “Let us rise and build”, is a call to reconstruction. Reconstruction presupposes liberation from that which caused destruction in the first place or at least prevented the preservation and thriving of that which now needs to be restored. The case of former American slaves is pertinent here.⁷²

Similarly, in South Africa, after successful elections in 1994, and the establishment of a democratically elected government, the Government of National Unity adopted the ‘Reconstruction and Development Programme’ (RDP) as its blueprint for meeting the expectations of the South African people.⁷³ In this case, reconstruction meant many things, including development, reconciliation and the removal of racial barriers. The South African

⁶⁹ See Ronald K. McKim (ed.), *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove/Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 215.

⁷⁰ D. A. Carson, *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (Flemings/Cape Town: Paternoster, 1984), 13.

⁷¹ Carson, *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, 13.

⁷² W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Millwood, 1976), 20.

case thus seems to encompass several components of reconstruction; there was liberation from an oppressive regime, reorganization of state institutions and resources, and with a commitment to the emancipation of all. Therefore, reconstruction can have different meanings according to the context.

In the theological context, however, reconstruction is a process for engendering liberating social practice in the face of human suffering.⁷⁴ A number of African scholars have claimed the paradigm of reconstruction as an alternative theological approach. In chapter 3 I will consider in detail the work of three of these scholars, namely Kā Mana of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jesse Mugambi of Kenya and Charles Villa-Vicencio of South Africa. But if I may generalize now for the sake of introduction, for Kā Mana, reconstruction occurs in the encounter between Africans and Christ, insofar as this encounter offers possibilities of a new world that is rich in love, justice, solidarity and the abundance of life.⁷⁵

In Mugambi's view, reconstruction is constructive rather than destructive, inclusive rather than exclusive, and proactive rather than reactive.⁷⁶ According to Villa-Vicencio, however, reconstruction is a response to the challenge of the Church in its task of restoring justice and affirming human dignity, a process aiming at moving people away from the lust for domination and exploitation.⁷⁷ He maintains, however, that liberation should be a starting point for reconstruction. These three African scholars have made a significant contribution to African theology of the 21st century. All three advocate reconstruction as a new paradigm after liberation, and agree that the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st create a new context. Consequently, the role that could be played by liberation and inculturation theologies appears to them to be no longer adequate.

From the above, it can be said that reconstruction is a process in which the task is to restore/liberate people from a bad situation of life, in order to develop a new one in which it is good to live. It entails liberation from bondage such as poverty, oppression and discrimination, and the establishment of justice, liberty and equality.

⁷³ Ashley Symes and Andre Fourie, *Building a Winning Nation: Companies and the RDP* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1994), xv.

⁷⁴ Julio De Santa Ana, "Spirit of Truth set us Free" Pp.429-438 in *Constructive Christian Theology*. Edited by William R. Barr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁷⁵ Kā Mana, *Foi Chrétienne*, 42.

⁷⁶ Jesse K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction* (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1995), xv.

In this study, I will use reconstruction in the complete (i.e., horizontal and vertical) sense, which means reconstruction that reconstructs not only social relations, but also our relationship with God. It is the latter, as Kä Mana argues, that breeds the exciting possibilities or vision of a new and better world.⁷⁸

1.5.3 Social discourse

Fundamentally, the term ‘discourse’ refers to a set of utterances which constitute any recognizable speech event.⁷⁹ For instance, Degenaar argues that the term refers to language in action and it is used to remind us of the social and historical conditions that play a role in the functioning of language.⁸⁰ In this regard, a discourse is the communication of thoughts through speech, which can be either spoken or written.

O’Sullivan notes that discourses are the product of social, historical and institutional formations.⁸¹ As such, the meanings of these discourses are produced by these institutional formations. It is in this sense that one speaks of political discourse, academic discourse, religious discourse, and so forth. In view of this, a discourse is a set of representations which includes several factors or aspects.

As van den Heever clearly states, “discourse is the sum of the institutionalized, multi-originated set of representations originating from social interests shaped by a certain social location, governed by a logic that binds it together into an identifiable identity and ‘read’ within the context of another discourse.”⁸²

It must follow that social discourse is a discourse concerning society in general, and, in particular, the welfare of human beings as members of society for the purpose of sociability.⁸³ Social discourse is interested mainly in ensuring the welfare of all members of the community and reinforcing sociability.

⁷⁷ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 2.

⁷⁸ Kä Mana, *Foi Chrétienne*, 42.

⁷⁹ David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 4th Edition (Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 118.

⁸⁰ John Degenaar, “*Religious Discourse, Power and Public*”. *Neotestamentica*, 31, No.1 (1997):39-58.

⁸¹ T. O’Sullivan, *Key Concepts in communication* (London: Routledge, 1983), 73-74.

⁸² G. van den Heever, *Socio-Rhetoric Biblical Interpretation* (unpublished). Canada: St. Paul University, 2007.

⁸³ Philip Babcock Gove, *Webster’s Third International Dictionary of the English Language*, Unabridged: A Merriam-Webster (Springfield: Merriam, 1961), 2161.

But whether a discourse is produced in the sense of the restructuring of institutions or a change in the conditions of people's lives within a society, one can say that such a discourse contains a social action.⁸⁴

From the above synopsis, I understand social discourse to be an institutionalized set of representations established within a society with the aim of ensuring the welfare of its members. In this study, I will consider Christian religious discourse to be a social discourse, insofar as it contains social action aiming at a transformation of people's living conditions, via the application of biblical principles to social problems. In a word, I am interested in the religious aspects of the social discourse that exists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

1.5.4 Religious discourse

Religious discourse is fundamentally social. In his article, "Religious discourse as metaculture", Matt Tomlinson argues that religious discourse is a cultural product.⁸⁵ According to him, religious discourse is the privileged domain by which culture is transmitted.

I concur with Tomlinson in the sense that the Christianization of Africa by the white missionaries is a case in point. Indeed, these missionaries did not safeguard African culture; rather they have almost completely erased it in order to replace with their own. It is for this reason that the theology of inculturation strives to make the gospel relevant to Africans within their own culture which was long undermined.

On the other hand, Degenaar is interested in the sources of religious discourse. He argues that we must at least distinguish between Christian traditions, the Church, theology, biblical scholarship, the religious community and so on, as sources of Christian religious discourse.⁸⁶ For the purposes of this study, we can distinguish four sources for the reconstructive religious discourse we envisage. Firstly, the biblical text which I examine (Romans) is a source for reconstructive religious discourse.

⁸⁴ J. A. Simpson, and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd Edition, Vol. 13 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 907.

⁸⁵ Matt Tomlinson, "Religious Discourse as Metaculture." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Vol. 15, No. 1 (2002):25-47.

⁸⁶ Degenaar, "Religious Discourse", 55.

Secondly, there are the declarations of the National Bishops Conference in the Democratic Republic Congo, along with the National Synod of the Church of Christ in Congo. Thirdly, the theological approaches of the biblical scholars examined in this study are also sources for this religious discourse. Finally, the whole Congolese community constitutes also a source of this discourse. We cannot solely read the biblical texts, the approaches of scholars and the declarations of the Church; we must also listen to the population, the men and women who are suffering.

In light of this, I can understand that when a group of people or an institution organizes itself in the name of religion and establishes the practices and discourse that identify it, one can speak of a religious discourse. As Joyce writes, discourses and practices organized around conceptions of ‘society’ become the means by which different groups and institutions come to identify and organize themselves.⁸⁷

In light of this, the important question is: what is the possible role that religious discourse can play in influencing public opinion or in the context of social change? Degenaar again, in examining this question, argues that religious discourses can only be meaningfully discussed with regard to their possible influence on public opinion if the variety of discourses and audiences is adequately taken into account.⁸⁸ As Taylor reminds, “In modern nation states, of all the instruments that militant sections of population have used for mobilization, religious discourse and practice have often been among the most effective and powerful for a novel sense of identity.”⁸⁹

Therefore, I understand the term ‘religious discourse’ to be a special type of social discourse produced by an institution (Church) and possessing immense potential to change the living conditions of a community. In other words, sociological theory is applicable to religious discourse because the latter can take place only within the bounds of society.

Hence, in the context of this study, I will use the term ‘religious discourse’ to indicate the Christian discourse of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Re-awakening and Kimbanguist Churches in relation to political, social and economic conditions prevailing in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁸⁷ Patrick Joyce, *Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 183.

⁸⁸ Degenaar, “*Religious Discourse*”, 55.

⁸⁹ Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 66.

1.5.5 Postcolonial

Literally, the term postcolonial refers to what comes *after* colonization. Segovia for instance, agrees that “the different uses of the term come about as a result of the specific force assigned to the prefix, the precise meaning of ‘what comes after’.”⁹⁰

According to Sugirtharajah, when postcolonial is used with a hyphen (i.e. post-colonial), the term denotes the historical period and aftermath of colonization. But when it is used without a hyphen (i.e. postcolonial), it means a reactive resistance discourse of the colonized.⁹¹ In this last sense, postcolonial is a reaction against the colonization, its imperialist ideology and all its incarnations. Therefore, ‘postcolonial’ implies attitudes that commence at the onset of the colonization project and so does not only include the aftermath of colonization. The entire project of colonization provokes a conscious awareness and problematization of the relationship of domination and subordination involved in colonization.⁹²

In the theological context, a postcolonial reading of the Bible “seeks to uncover colonial designs in both biblical texts and their interpretations, and an effort to read the text from postcolonial concerns such as identity, hybridity and Diaspora.”⁹³

Similarly, a postcolonial feminist reading of the Bible looks to unmask how the Bible has been used in different ways through the centuries to subordinate women. According to Musa Dube, postcolonial feminist hermeneutics of liberation are, therefore, practices that seek liberation from both patriarchy and imperialism by realizing that gender empowerment cannot be realized while these two structural forms of oppression exist. She defines ‘patriarchy’ as a social, economic and political institution that is structurally arranged from a male point of view, giving power primarily to males and relegating the majority of women, certain groups of people such as homosexuals, blacks, youth and lower classes to social margins. Nevertheless, she concedes that not every patriarchal society is imperialist.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Fernando, F. Segovia and Stephen, D. Moore (eds.), *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 65.

⁹¹ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 8.

⁹² Segovia and Moore, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 65.

⁹³ Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative way of Reading the Bible and doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 4.

⁹⁴ Musa W. Dube, “*Jumping the Fire with Judith: Postcolonial Feminist Hermeneutics of Liberation*” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*. Edited by Silvia Schroer and Sophia

From the above, I can understand the term ‘postcolonial’ as a term designating many things at once. It can mean a period, a resistance discourse, a reaction, a method, an instrument and so forth. However, it must be underlined that in its essence the term emphasized first on the conflicts that exist within colonizer and colonized relationships, and second it also deal with the failure of the new independent nation states to promote the democracy and social development.⁹⁵ In this dissertation ‘postcolonial’ is relevant not only because it will be used as a period after the colonization, but also because it enables us to analyze unjust situations, with a view to resisting them.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This investigation is limited to post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo. The study focuses on current Christian religious discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, drawn specifically from Christian Churches (the mission’s Churches, re-awakening Churches and Kimbanguist Church) in Kinshasa, the seat of all institutions of the Republic. Although it could be possible to find substantial literature related to political theology and political philosophy in French speaking tradition, this research explores only some available in French.

I have been away from Kinshasa for some time now, studying in South Africa. Therefore the study will rely more on formal literature than on personal experience or interviews with relevant personalities within the Democratic Republic of Congo. Moreover, I cannot claim to have consulted all the pertinent literature since I am limited by time and money to what I could find around Pretoria and via the internet.

1.7 Outline of chapters

Bietenhard, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Sup. Series 374* (London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003): 60-76.

⁹⁵ Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, 16.

The first chapter has introduced the study. It succinctly provided the background and rationale for the study, the definition of relevant key terms, as well as the methodology used in this study, namely the comparative method.

The second chapter examines the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It selects four religious groups and then describes, analyzes and evaluates each group by examining their beliefs about social issues. The quest is to establish and critically evaluate the Christian religious discourse that currently exists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The third chapter focuses on the reconstruction theology approach. It critically examines the approaches of the three scholars: Kä Mana, Jesse Mugambi and Charles Villa-Vicencio. It highlights the main tenets of reconstruction theology. Their differences and similarities will be examined as well as the strengths and weaknesses.

The fourth chapter attempts a reading of the Bible from a reconstructive religious discourse. The chapter strives to develop a reconstructive reading of the New Testament from the example of Farisani's reading of Ezra-Nehemiah and Romans.

The fifth chapter reflects on moving towards a reconstructive religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It examines some current challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and shows the use, the application, the strengths and the weaknesses of a Christian reconstructive religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In its turn, the last chapter, namely chapter six, concludes the study by summarizing the findings of the research.

Chapter 2: Current Christian Religious Discourse in the DRC

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the current Christian religious discourse in post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo. As indicated in the previous chapter, it examines only the religious discourses of the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and the Kimbanguist Church and Re-awakening Churches. It then evaluates their discourses with regard to their beliefs about social issues in the Congolese context. The main reason for choosing these groups is that they command membership of most Congolese Christians and should therefore supply a representative picture.

Each of these denominations is first looked at in isolation in terms of the following structure: a general description, beliefs about social issues, and an evaluation thereof. It is necessary to look at each one individually because their attitudes toward one another are not a simple matter. For instance, the Re-awakening Churches often loathe the Catholic and Protestant Mission Churches, accusing them of lacking the Holy Spirit. Conversely, the Catholics and Protestants qualify the Re-awakening Churches as sects, viewing them as too spiritualist, and preaching a gospel that focuses on prosperity and the desperate search for material wealth.

Despite the obvious differences in emphases as well as the rivalry between groups, I am convinced that a Christian religious discourse can play an important social role in the rebuilding of this paradoxical country that is on the one hand very rich in natural resources and yet whose people live in abject poverty. In other words, although I shall refer to specific denomination, I hope in this study to develop a discourse that academicians and all religious persons interested in the welfare of the Democratic Republic Congo and other similar situations can appreciate and apply in their different spheres of influence.

2.2 The Roman Catholic Church

2.2.1 Background

Christianity was introduced to the Congo in 1482, with the arrival of Portuguese explorers. The first missionary group that came from Portugal and that arrived in 1491 consisted of Catholic missionaries.⁹⁶ The ancient Congo Kingdom welcomed the Catholic missionaries, embraced Christianity and entered into some alliance with the Portuguese.⁹⁷ The king of Kongo, Afonso I, was baptized by these missionaries in 1492, and Christianity was established as the official religion of the land.⁹⁸ However, this first exclusively Roman Catholic attempt at evangelization of the Kongo Kingdom was unsuccessful. However, the Church did flourish during the second wave of evangelization, with the arrival of Holy Ghost priests in Boma in 1865, and Baptist missionaries in San Salvador in 1878.⁹⁹

Among the reasons for this earlier failure, one can mention in particular the difficulty of the local language on the part of the missionaries. But according to Frans Bontinck quoted by Vanneste,¹⁰⁰ among other causes one can mention equally the high death rate among the missionaries, the insufficient number of the missionaries for such a large country, the slave trade which caused the disintegration of the Kingdom of Kongo, the conflict between missionary groups (namely, the Padroado and the sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), as well as the shallow training of those who were baptized. Furthermore, many of the missionaries abandoned the priestly duty for the trading activities in the search of money. As such, the missionaries have a part of responsibility in this failure, mainly because they did not understand the African culture.

Moreover, as Cornelius argues about the later time when mission had become successful, “the Catholic missions were further advantaged politically by the backing of the “parti Social Chrétien” (Christian social Party) in Belgium, and the Congolese population often tended to see the Catholic missionaries as representative of the colonizing power.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Johnston Harry, *George Grenfell and the Congo* (London: Hutchison, 1908), 63.

⁹⁷ Wrong, *In the Footsteps*, 41.

⁹⁸ Harry, *George Grenfell*, 70.

⁹⁹ Harry, *George Grenfell*, 80.

¹⁰⁰ A. Vanneste, “Frans Bontinck: L’homme et son Oeuvre, Biography de Frans Renaat Bontinck” Pp.431-437 in *Mabiala Mantumba-Ngoma. La nouvelle Histoire du Congo: Melanges eurafricains offerts a Frans Bontinck*. CICM (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004).

¹⁰¹ Jaenen J. Cornelius, *Book Reviews: Cross and Sword: The Political Role of Christian missions in Belgian Congo, 1908-1960 in American Political Science Review* 71 (1): 419-420.

King Leopold II, the Belgian king, led the displacement of Catholic missionaries for the Congo and accorded them subsidies, property and rights to fulfill certain state functions as Hochschild asserts in the following:

Unlike the Congo's Protestant missionaries who were foreigners and beyond Leopold's control, the Catholic missionaries were mostly Belgians and loyal supporters of the King and his regime. Leopold subsidized the Catholic lavishly and sometimes used his financial power to deploy priests, almost as if they were soldiers, to areas where he wanted to strengthen his influence.¹⁰²

Therefore, the Catholic missionaries shared the views of colonial authorities. Consequently, a great divergence occurred during the first half of the twentieth century between Catholic and Protestant missionaries due to this situation, and Protestant criticism finally pushed the Belgian authorities to extend subsidies to Protestant schools in 1946.¹⁰³

By 1960, there were 700 Catholic missionary stations, and in 1970, the africanization of the archdiocese, diocese and parish occurred.¹⁰⁴ At this time, there was a kind of nationalism within the Catholic Church, initiated by Cardinal Malula, Archbishop of Kinshasa. The liturgy of the Church was radically changed and adapted to the African context – one now had to sing African songs in the Church, and responsibility in the Church was held by black priests throughout the Republic. Today, the Roman Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo is composed of 6 ecclesiastical provinces and 40 suffragan dioceses.

2.2.2 Beliefs about social issues

It is through the training of its faithful members and Church commissions that the Catholic Church transmits its religious discourse. The number of commissions can vary from one year to another, and it is clear from this that the Roman Catholic Church does pay attention to the needs of its members who are facing a crisis as a result of problems in society. With regard to development, the Roman Catholic Church, through the Commission of Development, invites its members to participate in community work, in order to maintain a balance between the membership and the environment.

¹⁰² Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 134.

¹⁰³ *Presbyterians at work around the world* (cited from the online version: <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/congo/religions.htm> accessed on 02 April 2008).

¹⁰⁴ *Presbyterians at work around world* (cited from the online version: <http://www.pcusa.org/worldwide/Congo/religions.htm> accessed on 02 April 2008).

It also encourages, for example, the training of community workers and advisors in terms of HIV/AIDS, in order for them to be able to evaluate knowledge, attitudes and practices in this field.¹⁰⁵

Faced with the deterioration of the conditions of life in the country, and the failure of the state to play its role properly, the Roman Catholic Church in Democratic Republic Congo urges Catholic intellectuals to better realize their role in society by assuming responsibility for the critical conscience of society, and by showing their expertise in the service of edification for a free and just society.¹⁰⁶ In this regard, faithful Catholics have an ethical responsibility.

However, in the face of dysfunctional government structures, the Catholic Church, along with other churches, has provided most of the basic services, such as healthcare and education, for the population. It must be noted that during the period of conflict, the education sector was financed almost entirely by parents' contributions. As teachers are usually not paid or poorly paid, the Roman Catholic Church thus invites leaders of educational establishments to make sacrifices – in other words, they must agree to teach children in spite of not being paid, and at the same time, they could express their requests to the relevant authorities, in order to improve their working and living conditions.¹⁰⁷ That is really painful in a country as potentially rich as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

However, the direct reaction of the Catholic Church was late. As Haynes argues, it is true that the Catholic hierarchy, until the early 1990s, was consistently unwilling to engage the regime in direct and public confrontation.¹⁰⁸ It was only when most Congolese people became discouraged and disillusioned, and the result was massive disengagement from the state and national politics by the public in general, that in April 1990, twelve Catholic bishops wrote a highly publicized pastoral letter to President Mobutu, in which they offered their appraisal of the national crisis and called for extensive reforms.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Orientations Pastorales 2005-2006, *Archidiocèse de Kinshasa: Centre Pastoral Lindonge*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ Orientations Pastorales, 14.

¹⁰⁷ It is a system that began in 2001, when the economy of the country was in decline. The government of the Republic was unable to pay teachers, and the Catholic Church had implemented the taking charge of teachers by parents. Later, the Protestant and Kimbanguist Churches followed suit, and even official schools of the state. The goal was to avoid 'année blanche' and to ensure the well-being of pupils.

¹⁰⁸ Jeff Haynes, "Religion and Democratization." *Democratization*. Vol.11, No.4 (August 2004): 66-89.

¹⁰⁹ F. Soudan, "Zaire les Evêques accusent", *Jeunes Afrique*(Avril 1990): 2-5.

On February 16, 1992, young Catholic priests and nuns lay Christians and a group of political activists organized a protest march across the country, in which the Catholic hierarchy was publicly engaged to oppose Mobutu's authoritarian rule.¹¹⁰

In addition, the Roman Catholic Church never ceases to address the government, political class and Congolese population through the message of members of the National Bishops Conference of the Congo. Faced with violence in the Eastern province of Kivu, it is in the Congolese crises document of the Bishops that the members of the permanent committee of the National Bishops Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo voiced their cry of desperation and protest. The Bishops compared the humanitarian tragedy in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo to a "silent genocide". The Bishops Conference deplors that:

these unfortunate events are taking place under the unperturbed eyes of those who received the mandate to keep peace and protect the civil population. The bishops note that our own leaders have proved powerless in face of the dimensions of the situation... and that the national resources of the Congo shows the avidity of certain powers and isn't extraneous to the violence imposed on the population, and the bishops then call on the Congolese people not to cede to any foolish aspirations for the 'balkanization' of their national territory.¹¹¹

Similarly, in its message on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo expressed its disappointment in the following terms: "Indeed from the bottom to the top everyone complains about the conditions of life which become from day to day more difficult for the majority of the population. In these conditions, the people in particular point at 'corruption' and ask for change."¹¹² Very recently, reacting to the unfortunate event that took place on the nights of 2 and 3 October 2009, when uniformed men abducted two priests and a Seminarist at the Chierano Parish in the Archdiocese of Bukavu, the National Episcopal Conference came forward to strongly condemn these heinous acts. It reminds the authorities as political-administrative and military police their solemn obligation to protect people and property.

¹¹⁰ Afoaku, *Explaining the Failure of Democracy*, 76.

¹¹¹ *Message of the National Bishops of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the violence in the Eastern province* (cited from the online version: http://www.afrcamission_mafr.org/misna203.htm accessed on 21 October 2009).

¹¹² *Message of the National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the Independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo* (cited from the online version: <http://www.cenco.cd/presidence/message> accessed on 05 July 2009).

It calls for a thorough investigation to be conducted to identify the perpetrators and sponsors of these heinous acts in order to ensure that justice is done.¹¹³

All in all, in spite of the elections held in 2006, and in spite of an elected government in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the violence and suffering continue in the country in general, and in the Eastern province of Kivu in particular, and this situation calls for an engagement. Accordingly Congolese people need to find their own solution because the government seems unable to secure it for them.

2.2.3 Evaluation

The current religious discourse of the Roman Catholic Church is important during this phase of reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The question is whether, at the Congolese government level, there is a willingness to consider this discourse in order to improve government politics. That is not so easy in the view of many, because for instance the resolutions which came out of the national consultations organized by religious confessions in 2000 have never been applied by the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Church must always strengthen its authority if it wants to be listened to and to confirm its independence vis-à-vis the state. The Christians must resolve that whether or not the government honours the recommendations of the Church, there are other ways. As Kornfield argues the Christians who are living in a non-Christian world can, by the way of living and walking, influence these who are around¹¹⁴. Those Christians who are for example in the government or another public institution represent already a body and possess a transforming power of the gospel of Jesus in them.

Further, the Catholic discourse is encouraging, firstly due to the fact that it focuses a lot on social issues, especially in the efforts of the Catholic hierarchy to challenge the government when the latter goes against natural law. Secondly this discourse is also important because it is a discourse of an institution (Church) and involves social action, with the aim of restoring or liberating the Congolese people from the situation in which they find themselves today.

¹¹³ *Statement of the National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo on Violence* (cited from the online version: <http://www.cenco.cd/presidence/message> accessed on 21 October 2009).

¹¹⁴ David Kornfield, *Church Renewal: A Handbook for Christian Leaders* (Exeter: The Paternoster, 1989), 100.

But, on the other hand, this discourse must continue to resist, in order to achieve its objective of restoring, liberating and developing the country.

2.3 Protestant Church

2.3.1 Background

Protestant missionaries arrived in the Belgian Congo in January 1878, when pioneer Baptist missionaries first landed on the shores of the Congo.¹¹⁵ Their work originally started under the Livingstone Island Mission, which had been handed over to the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society.¹¹⁶ The first two missionary pioneers to arrive in the Congo in 1878, and who were the most active, were George Grenfell and Thomas Comber, both British Baptist missionaries, and they proceeded to build a series of stations along the shores of the Congo River.

Later on, several missionary societies joined the evangelization efforts in the Congo. These were namely the Presbyterian Church of the United States, one of the largest missions in Congo, which started its work in the Kasai provinces (1890); the Congo Inland Mission (Mennonites), which started its work in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), and then established missions in the Kasai provinces (1912); the Methodist Church in Congo, which worked in central and southern Congo in the Katanga province (1913). The Evangelical Covenant Church of America and the Evangelical Free Church of America worked together in the Congo, in what is called the Evangelical Mission of Ubangi (1960), in the North-East of Congo in the Equatorial province.¹¹⁷

These are therefore the foreign missions that evangelized the Congo and founded the Churches which are today called ‘traditional’, ‘historical’, ‘mission’, or ‘established’ Churches. The different Protestant missions were organized into a committee known as “The Congo Protestant Council” in 1924. It was a space where all the Protestant missionaries could meet to discuss their problems. At the time of independence in 1960, the Protestant missions left the autonomy to the Congolese churches, in order for them to manage themselves.

¹¹⁵ John Brown Myers, *The Congo for Christ: The History of the Congo Mission* (London: Partridge, 1911), 9.

¹¹⁶ Robert G. Nelson, *Congo Crisis and Christian Mission*. (Toronto: Weld, 1961), 34.

In 1970, the Congo Protestant Council was officially transformed into the Church of Christ in Congo. It advocates unity in diversity; it is led by a president and functions under a National Synod and a National Executive Committee.

2.3.2 Beliefs about social issues

As with the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church is also concerned with the suffering of the Congolese people and the deteriorating situation in the country. The National Synod, held in Kinshasa from 4 to 22 August 2004, voiced the beliefs of the Protestant Church with regard to social issues. From this report, it is clear that the Church of Christ in the Democratic Republic of Congo was both aware of the general decline of the country which has impacted all sectors of national life and expressed a fervent worry about the reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Following that, the National Executive Committee focused on examining the general situation of both the country and the Church through the president's report, and consequently on taking resolutions which seek to lead the people of God to the road of peace.¹¹⁸

During the meeting, the delegates discussed the problem of the transformation of Congolese men and women, which is necessary in order for reconstruction and development to take place. They also identified some evils that needed to be combated, for example, laziness and selfishness, in order for national reconstruction to be effective.¹¹⁹ However, the statement of the 13th National Synod of the Church of Christ in Congo regarding the socio-political situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo can be summarized according to four levels: the people's level, the Church level, the government level and the political level.

At the people's level, the Church of Christ in Congo asks the people to remain vigilant. At the Church level, the recommendations are to pray for the peace and stability of the country, and to teach the political class to not be motivated by personal interests. At the government level, the recommendations are to take charge of youth education, establish good governance and institute the authority of the state.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Nelson, *Congo Crisis and Christian Mission*,, 35, 36.

¹¹⁸ *Procès Verbal de la 40 ème Session Ordinaire du Comité Exécutif National de l'ECC tenue à Kinshasa du 29 au 02/07/2008.*

¹¹⁹ *Procès Verbal de la 13e Session Ordinaire du Synode National de l'ECC tenue a Kinshasa du 4-22 Août 2004.*

Through its Department of Medical Services, the Protestant Church of Congo provides leadership for the Church of Christ in Congo's network of members of 62 communities, which includes 80 hospitals and more than 400 Health Centers in all regions. It is important to remember that even during the time of war, SANRU (the Rural Health Program), in partnership with International Medical Assistance World Health, continued to provide basic healthcare behind rebel lines. The Church of Christ in Congo, in collaboration with the Catholic Health System, provides around 50 percent of the health services in the country.¹²¹

With regard to HIV/AIDS, the Church of Christ in Congo considers the disease to be an obstacle to the reconstruction of the country. Through its ministry to the youth, the Center of Health, "Bomoto" (a center of training for the youth of the Church of Christ in Congo), takes charge of education and training on HIV/AIDs for the population. However, with regard to the use of condoms, the position of the Church of Christ in Congo is similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church. Insofar as marriage is considered by the Church to be a sacred union, and sexual relations are confined to this union. Consequently, in marriage, the use of condoms does not have any meaning.¹²² With regard to the violence and insecurity in the eastern province of the country, the participants in the National Executive Committee concurred in their final statement that:

after the democratic and free elections held in 2006, the picture of daily national life has not improved. Even the weak light that lighted has been quickly disappeared by insecurity, slaughter, wars, natural disasters and diseases. It deplores the fact that the number of 800 000 refugees in Goma's outlying areas continues to grow.¹²³

Indeed many Congolese people had hoped that the elections of 2006 would bring peace and stability in the country. Unfortunately, instead, the post-election Democratic Republic of Congo continued to experience many problems: conflicts, insecurity, violence and instability, especially in the East. More than 1000 people continue to die each day, and most of the deaths are due to disease and malnutrition, as a result of the displacement of civilians from their homes. Today, it is clear that the root cause of the conflict and war is the struggle to control the country's natural resources. Vast quantities of mineral wealth are leaving Congo everyday without benefit to the Congolese people.

¹²⁰ *Procès Verbal de la 13e Session.*

¹²¹ International Medical Assistance (IMA) World Health and the Church of Christ in Congo (cited from the online version: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171> accessed on 21 October 2009).

¹²² Procès Verbal de la 13e Session Ordinaire du Synode National de L'ECC, 7-8.

¹²³ Procès Verbal de la 40ème Session Ordinaire du Comité Exécutif National de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo tenue à Kinshasa du 29 Juillet au 02 Août et le 20Août 2008.

However, I believe that the suffering in the Democratic Republic of Congo today is not only caused by external forces. There are also internal enemies who pose an even bigger threat. For instance, Wrong rightly notes that: “during the cold war the president Mobutu was recognized with his spectacular accumulation of wealth for himself.”¹²⁴ Certain sources asserted that the product of state societies such as MIBA and Kilo-Moto became then Mobutu’s property, while the Zaïrian people were the poorest in the world.

From all this, the Congolese people must learn to recognize and analyze their plight, to know where the problem is coming from. I think that there is a problem of morality that poses with acuteness. We need a moral renewal in order to reconstruct our country.

2.3.3 Evaluation

From the above, it is clear that the current Christian religious discourse of the Church of Christ in Congo can have an impact during the reconstruction phase, insofar as there is a willingness among the people, the Church, the political class and the government to act appropriately and harmoniously. However, on the other hand, the Protestant discourse, although it pays attention to the social situation of the Congolese people, does not make an effort at the level of the Protestant hierarchy to challenge the government.

Since the beginning of the Second Republic the Protestant Church has been unable to express its disappointment with the state of affairs. In my opinion, this silence of the Church of Christ in Congo is compromising. It seems as if the Protestant Church believes that the government, however bad, is exercising authority ordained by God and therefore should not be openly challenged.¹²⁵ But even if the Church maintains good relationships with the state, the Church must be critical of it. Van der Walt reminds us that “Desmond Tutu never tired to emphasize two things: 1) that religion is concerned with politics and 2) that we as Christians should therefore be critical about every government.”¹²⁶ The Church must be critical of government when the latter, for example, does not pay the salaries of civil servants.

¹²⁴ Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz*, 118.

¹²⁵ A simplistic reading of Rom 13:1 (For there is no authority except from God) seems to be the root of this belief and attitude.

¹²⁶ B.J. van den Walt, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa: From Desperation Today to Expectation Tomorrow* (Potchefstroom: Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, 2003), 308.

Iyenda noted that “civil servants remain unpaid for several months in the cities and more than one year in the rural areas.”¹²⁷

This neglect of civil servants by government is the root of all the problems in the Democratic Republic of Congo. If university professors are asking students for money in order for them to succeed in a course, it is because they have not been paid. Consequently, the quality of education is lower than it should be. If doctors and nurses in hospitals require money before taking care of a patient, it is because they have also not been paid. Consequently, the rate of mortality increases. The same is true if the population becomes a target for police and soldiers – this is because the latter have also not been paid. As a result, there is a lot of harassment by police, as well as looting and murder on a daily basis. At the justice level, if justice does not exist, it is because judges and magistrates have also not been properly paid.

At the level of people, it is good that the Church of Christ in Congo advises them to continually pray for the normalization of the situation in the country. Nevertheless, it is also important to emphasize that prayer without action serves no purpose. When Jesus Christ told his disciples to ask, to seek and to knock (Luke 11:8-10; Matt 7:7-12), all three verbs are action verbs, and are continuous.¹²⁸ Marshall correctly argues that “people ought not think of God as unwilling to give. He is already ready to give goods gifts to his people. But it is important that they do their part by asking.”¹²⁹

In a similar fashion, Bock comments that “the three present imperatives indicate that disciples are to ask, seek, and knock continually.”¹³⁰ This means that one must not only continue praying, but must also seek and knock. As Hendrickson argues, “seeking is asking plus acting. It implies earnest petitioning, but this alone is not sufficient.”¹³¹ The action here implies that the Church must resist by saying ‘No!’ to oppression, violence and injustice, and to be on the people’s side; the Church must be in the centre of the village. Kā Mana underlines Christian responsibility for the renaissance of Africa.

¹²⁷ Iyenda, *Household livelihood*, 12.

¹²⁸ Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A commentary on the Greek Text* (Cape Town/Ganville: Paternoster Press, 1978), 214.

¹²⁹ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 214.

¹³⁰ Daniel Bock, *Luke Vol.2, 9:51-24:53* (Michigan: Backer Books, 1996), 1060.

¹³¹ William Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids/Michigan: Baker Books House, 1973), 262.

He argues that facing to all the enemies that divide Africa, the responsibility of Christians is to work against these forces and destroy them through Jesus Christ in order to reconstruct a new Africa.¹³²

From this analysis, it can be argued that a good prayer must be accompanied by actions. Therefore, one can conclude that the current Christian religious discourse of the Church of Christ in Congo, although it pays attention to social issues, does not make an effort at the Protestant Church hierarchy level to challenge the government. Therefore, the Christian religious discourse of the Church of Christ in Congo is good, but it lacks open resistance aspects in order to play properly its role. For it to be it must challenge and resist. Consequently, in my opinion it is not a reconstructive discourse. Now, I take a look at the Christian religious discourse of the Re-awakening churches.

2.4 The Kimbanguist Church

2.4.1 Background

The Kimbanguist Church is the first African Independent Church (AIC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the largest in black Africa. Like many others of its kind, it came into existence within the context of reaction to colonial power.

The prophet Simon Kimbangu was born on 24 September 1889 in Nkamba, a village in Bas Congo, a province of Democratic Republic of Congo, situated in the North of Angola and the South Western region of Congo Brazzaville.¹³³ Nduku-Fessau Badze, a Kimbanguist pastor and theologian, in an interview with Religioscope, asserted that “Simon Kimbangu was a Baptist Christian, after receiving primary training he was appointed catechist by the Baptist Missionary Society in Ngongo-Lutete.”¹³⁴ He continued that Kimbangu had received his calling when he was still a young man, but he was quite reluctant. Nevertheless, his mission commenced when he prayed for a wife who was in agony, and she was healed. From that time, Simon Kimbangu became a popular and well-known person.¹³⁵

¹³² Kä Mana, “*Chrétiens et Eglises d’Afrique: Penser l’Avenir, le Salut en Jésus Christ et la Construction de la Nouvelle Société Africaine.*” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2001): 8-13.

¹³³ Jules Chomé, *La Passion de Simon Kimbangu*. 2ème Edition (Bruxelles: Les Amies de ‘la Presence Africaine’, 1959), 5.

¹³⁴ Nduku-Fessau Badze, Interview with Religioscope on 29 August 2004 (cited from the online version: <http://www.religion.info> accessed on 08 October 2004).

¹³⁵ Badze. *Interview, 29 August 2004.*

Chomé reports that Simon Kimbangu did not only heal the sick, but he also taught. In a nutshell, his teaching condemned fetishism, polygamy, etc.¹³⁶

However, Simon Kimbangu was not the only one who called for resistance and reaction against the colonial power and the missionaries. Another reaction of note to colonial power came much earlier from a prophetess by the name of Dona Béatrice (Kimpa Vita). She was considered to be the leader of the first Kongo movement in the province of Bas Congo.

Beatrice proclaimed the coming of the judgment of God, and protested against the Catholic Church. Her preaching aimed at the restoration of the ancient Kingdom of Kongo, and she taught that Christ was born in Africa in San Salvador, and that his disciples were blacks. She was burned by the colonial power on July 2, 1706.¹³⁷

Béatrice Kimpa Vita of course was burned for having protested against the Catholic Church, but we must witness that her predication contained an expression of African form of expression and beliefs in the sense that she wanted to Africanize the Christian message. In a very real sense, Béatrice Kimpa Vita can be considered as the forerunner of Black Theology, because with her we encounter for the first time the idea of a black Christ.

As Badze recalls, Simon Kimbangu did not have the intention of founding a church.¹³⁸ When he died in 1951 after 30 years of imprisonment, the movement continued secretly with the founder's wife, Marie Muilu, as its leader. The Kimbanguist Church was then officially established 1959. Nguapitshi, another Kimbanguist theologian, asserts that in 1959, before Congo's political independence, it was officially recognized as a Church, and the leadership went to the founder's youngest son, Joseph Diangienda Kutima. In 1969, the Kimbanguist Church became the first Black African Independent Church to be admitted as a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC), and was known as 'L'Eglise de Jésus Christ sur la Terre par son Envoyé Special Simon Kimbangu (The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through his Special Messenger Simon Kimbangu).¹³⁹ As Nduku confirms, the Kimbanguist Church first developed strongly in Congo-Kinshasa, then in Angola, and Congo-Brazzaville. It also spread to several African countries and even to communities abroad including as far afield as France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States of America.

¹³⁶ Chomé, *La Passion de Simon Kimbangu*, 15.

¹³⁷ Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church*. Translated by M.D. Moore. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975),14.

¹³⁸ Badze. *Interview*, 29 August 2004.

¹³⁹ Léon Nguaputshi, "Kimbanguism: Its Present Christian Doctrine and the Problem raised by it." *Exchange* 34, No.3 (2005): 227-247.

The official statistics are 17 million Kimbanguists, and 10% of the Congolese people are Kimbanguists.¹⁴⁰

2.4.2 The Kimbanguist Doctrine

In his article entitled “Kimbanguism, its present Christian doctrine and the problem raised by it”, Nguapitshi asserts that “the former faith and the essence of Kimbanguist theology was based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ which Simon Kimbangu had powerfully preached in 1921 and during his stay in jail without any falsification.”¹⁴¹ In other words, the legacy that Simon Kimbangu left to his followers was biblical. At this time, “Kimbanguism remained a joyous religious faith which was expressed in hymns, prayers and sermons.”¹⁴²

However, Badze tells us that something extraordinary happened within the Kimbanguist Church after the passing away of the first spiritual leader, Joseph Diangienda Kuntima. The Kimbanguist Church decided to change the date of Christmas – it could not be celebrated on 25 December, but rather on 25 May.¹⁴³ Since 25 May 1999, the 25th of May has been declared to be the real date of the birth of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. The new date coincides with the date of birth of Simon Kimbangu’s second son, Salomon Dialungana Kiangani, who was born on 25 May 1916. He was the guardian of the holy city of Nkamba-Jerusalem from 1958 until 1992. Shortly before his death on August 16, 2001, he was applauded as being Jesus Christ, who returned, incognito, in our time.¹⁴⁴

In this regard, they moved away from the earlier Kimbanguist Church’s confession. Consequently, these developments led to a crisis in which the Kimbanguist Church was excluded from the World Council of the Churches in 1990. And later, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ in Congo ceased their ecumenical relations with the Kimbanguist Church.

Indeed, through his letter No. 334/EJCSK/CS/01/2001 of June 2003 sent to General Secretary of the World Council of the Churches in responding to the letter which asked for the official point of view of the Trinitarian crisis inside the Church, Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, the

¹⁴⁰ Badze. *Interview*, 29 August 2004.

¹⁴¹ Nguapitshi, “*Kimbanguist: Its present Christian Doctrine*”, 230.

¹⁴² Undy H, *Out of Africa: Kimbanguism with an Introductory Chapter* by P. Manicom (London: CEM Student Theology Series, 1979), 16.

¹⁴³ Badze, *Interview* 29 August 2004.

Spiritual Leader of the Church, said that the Kimbanguist Church maintains its beliefs in the Trinity, but concerning the second and third persons of the Trinity and in accordance with the experience of Congolese Kimbanguist Christians and non-Kimbanguists, Dialungana Kiangani is Jesus and Simon Kimbangu the Holy Spirit.

The Church of Christ in Congo through the National Executive Committee held in Kinshasa from 20-26 August 2001, made a declaration in which it considered the Kimbanguist Church as not “a Christian Church” and consequently it could not continue having ecumenical relations with the Kimbanguist Church. In response to this decision, through his letter No. 058/EJCSK/CS/2002, Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, the Spiritual Leader of the Kimbanguist Church asserted that “Simon Kimbangu is God.” Similarly, for the Roman Catholic Church, it was through the declaration of the National Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2 July 2004 where it was officially declared having that the Catholic Church has ceased her ecumenical relation with the Kimbanguist Church.

Contrary to what the Bible reveals, the name of God is attributed to Simon Kimbangu, who is the Holy Spirit, and his three sons, who together form the incarnated trinity on earth. And the majority of Kimbanguists say that Simon Kimbangu is God.

In terms of the new Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Kimbanguist Church believes that the manifestation of the Spirit at Pentecost in Jerusalem was not the Spirit which descended upon the apostles. The Holy Spirit himself was born later in 1887, as Simon Kimbangu. According to the etymological meaning of his name, Simon Kimbangu has been presented as *mbangi a yesu* ‘witness of Jesus’, *ngunza nzambi*, ‘prophet of god’, *mvula yesu*, ‘representative of Jesus’s authority’, *nsadisi*, ‘helper, assistant, comforter’, *nsadisi wa muala velela*, or *nsadisi wa muala ludi*, ‘an assistant of the holy spirit or the spirit of truth’ and finally, *muanda velela* or *mpeve ya longo*, holy Spirit.¹⁴⁵ In this regard, as one can expect, a number of religious hymns remind believers that Simon Kimbangu had not only been a prophet, but also the Holy Spirit.

With regard to the new Doctrine of the trinity, the influence of popular faith on the teaching of the Kimbanguist Church led to the following beliefs:

¹⁴⁴ Nguapitshi, “*Kimbanguist: Its Present Christian Doctrine*”, 235.

¹⁴⁵ Nguapitshi, “*Kimbanguist: Its present Christian Doctrine*”, 237.

The three sons of Simon Kimbangu: Daniel-Charles Kisolokele Lukelo (1914-1992), Salomon Dialungana Kiangana (1916-2001), and Joseph Diangienda Kuntima (1918-1994) are ‘gods’ in three persons, and the following are often heard in popular preaching:

1. That God the Father has become flesh in Daniel Kisolokele, the oldest son of Simon Kimbangu.
2. That God the son has become flesh again in Salomon Dialungana, the second son of Simon Kimbangu, who was the leader of the Kimbanguist Church from 1992-2001.
3. That God the Holy Spirit has ‘taken on flesh’ in Simon Kimbangu himself, embodied in his youngest son, Joseph Diangienda Kuntima, who was the chief spiritual leader of the Kimbanguist Church from 1957 to 1992, and again in his grandson Simon Kimbangu Kiangani, the present spiritual leader of the Church, who is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity.¹⁴⁶

Consequently, Mission 21, the former Bazel Mission, which the Kimbanguist Church has been partnership for over 30 years in an official letter to the ‘Chef spirituel’ on December 9, 2008, formally terminated its partnership with the Kimbanguist Church.¹⁴⁷

2.4.3 Evaluation

It is useful to note first that the Kimbanguist Church is the first re-awakening Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ash demonstrates the role played by the Kimbanguist Church in the development of the Zairian nation.¹⁴⁸ However, the above analysis clearly demonstrates that the new doctrine preached in this Church has moved away more and more from the universal Christian faith taught by the Church. The substitution of the name of God with Simon Kimbangu, and the replacement of the Trinity with the names of his three sons are incompatible with the faith confessed universally by the Church. Accordingly, there is a problem of coexistence between popular faith and official faith in the same Church.

In view of this it is clear that in the Kimbanguist Church there are two discourses. The first is that which maintains that its doctrine is contained in the essence of Kimbanguist theology.

¹⁴⁶ Nguapitshi, “*Kimbanguist: Its Present Christian Doctrine*”, 246.

¹⁴⁷ Heinrich, Balz. “*Kimbanguism Going Astray*.” Exchange 38 (2009): 355-364.

¹⁴⁸ Suzan Ash, *L’Eglise du Prophète Kimbangu: Des Origines à son Rôle Actuel au Zaïre* (Paris: Kathala, 1983).

It is the view of the Kimbanguist theologians such as Leon Nguapitshi and Nduku-Fessau Badze who advocate that if the Kimbanguist Church maintains this new doctrine then it must cease to be a Christian Church. Nguapitshi asserts that “if all these popular beliefs are really made official in the Kimbanguist Church’s teaching, this will widely open the road to a ‘new religion’. It would then become either a non-Christian religion or non-Christian sect which would no longer have the Holy Spirit as its basis, but only as a book among other sacred book which Kimbanguist will then agree to put in the place of the Bible alone, which Simon Kimbangu has bequeathed to us.”¹⁴⁹ The second discourse is the popular faith that supports the new doctrine.

In the light of the above, it is possible to argue that the crisis of the Kimbanguist Church is due to the incorporation of cultural ideas into practice of Christian faith. Accordingly, there is the coexistence of two doctrines. But, if we take the cultural point of view, it seems that the followers of Simon Kimbangu saw his message as a message of hope, a signal, a messianic message that would bring a political liberation. As Martin explicitly argues “the movement *Ngunzist* [from the Kikongo word ‘*ngunza*’, meaning ‘prophet’] believed that Kimbangu would return as ‘*ntotila*’ (a mythological figure), to re-establish the ancient Kingdom of Kongo by driving the whites into the sea.”¹⁵⁰ Then, this idea remains printed in the memory of the majority of Kimbanguists. Theologically, there is a problem of misinterpretation of the acts of power performed by Simon Kimbangu by his believers. The question arises whether the members of the Church have true knowledge of the faith they confess.

2.5 Re-awakening Churches

2.5.1 Background

The Re-awakening Churches, also called Independent Churches, are those Churches in which the leaders are generally dissidents of traditional/historical Churches, in which they were either Assistant Pastor, Evangelist, Deacon, Elder, or responsible for prayer or the choir. Causes for the emergence of these new churches or movements are numerous.

¹⁴⁹ Nguapitshi, *Kimbanguist: Its Present Christian Doctrine*, 227.

¹⁵⁰ A.L. Martin, *Prophetic Christianity in the Congo: The Church of Christ on the Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu* (Johannesburg: Christian Institute for Southern Africa, 1975), 73.

Rene de Hoes is of the view that these new Churches are the fruit of a double movement of deception and enthusiasm.¹⁵¹ Deception applies if the sectarians have been disappointed by a certain behavior within the Church. That could be either the liturgy of the Cult or the bad behavior of the responsible leaders. Enthusiasm, or excess of zeal, is also often responsible for the break away from the mother body.

But another cause for the emergence of these Churches is the political, social, and economic malaise with which the population lives every day. As Buntin argues politicians and state structures have lost almost all credibility or legitimacy. Consequently, religion emerged as a socio-political factor in galvanizing people such that it cannot be ignored in the analysis of contemporary issues.¹⁵² Because of suffering, many people without calling, found churches where they can themselves manage the offering, the tithes and other gifts. However, the real problem with these Churches as Wilson says is that often they reject the sacerdotalism, Church organization and believe that they alone possess the truth.¹⁵³

In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, one is looking at a phenomenon which one can qualify as drama. In Kinshasa, the capital, there is at least one Church on every street, and the majority of them fall under this category of Re-awakening Churches. These Churches are born every day and are often managed by their founder, called an Apostle, Prophet or Bishop. In general, most of these leaders have not done theological studies, and the majority of them do not have a well organized structure, as in the Roman Catholic Church or Protestant Church. Nevertheless, they have an association known as “Association des Eglises de Reveil au Congo” (Association of the Re-awakening Churches in Congo). This fact could be regarded as negative, but we must also consider the positive side as many theologians today agree that Independent Churches have evolved concrete forms of the Christian life. Maluleke for example argues that “the praxis of these churches must now be regarded not only the best illustration of African Christianity, but also a type of theology.”¹⁵⁴ For Mbiti, independent churches are expressions of African spiritual expression.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ R. de Hoes, *Les Sectes, une Interpellation* (Kinshasa: Edition Saint Paul d’Afrique, 1989), 22.

¹⁵² For this quotation see Ayo Whetho and Ufo Okele Uzodike, “‘Religious Networks in Post-conflict Democratic Republic of Congo’: Prognosis.” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*. Volume 8, no.3 (2008): 57-84.

¹⁵³ Bruyan Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* (London: World University Library, 1970), 15.

¹⁵⁴ Maluleke, “*Half a Century of African Christian Theologies*”, 16.

¹⁵⁵ John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Theology* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 93.

2.5.2 Beliefs about social issues

Jeff Haynes rightly argues that:

to many fundamentalist Christians in Africa, religion is concerned with social issues in the context of creation of a counter-culture involving a communal sharing of fears, ills, jobs, hopes and material success. Earthly misfortune is a result of lack of faith; God will reward true believers. Adherents believe that people's redemption is in their own hands (or rather in both God's and individuals' hands).¹⁵⁶

In terms of this view, and contrary to contrary to the traditional Churches, the re-awakening Churches assert that poverty, suffering, illness etc. are caused by demonical forces and claim to offer strong prayers to destroy witchcraft, demon possession, bad luck, bad dreams and all spiritual problems, and promise that members will gain prosperity and financial success.¹⁵⁷ In these Churches, all social ills are seen to be the work of an evil spirit, which lives in everything: the spirit of poverty, spirit of bachelorhood, spirit of sleep, etc.¹⁵⁸ and must be hunted and exorcised. For the Re-awakening Churches, Satan governs the country and has bewitched the leaders. According to these churches, political success derives inevitably from occult powers. Hence, conversion, confession and deliverance rituals are regarded as important turning point in the unfolding of cultural plot.¹⁵⁹ As Jenkins argues, these Churches gain support because of the way in which they deal with the demons of oppression.¹⁶⁰ In their liturgy, they emphasize glossolalia, which is considered to be a sign of the presence of God in the assembly. They have a liturgy adapted to the tastes of the membership, and have a committee that is in charge of the needs of members.

In this regard, the re-awakening Churches, faced with the deplorable social situation in the country and the misery of the population, rarely challenge the government. However, as Wilson asserts, "sectarians have been regarded not only as heretics, but as revolutionaries, and the anathema has been used to justify political oppression."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Haynes, "Religion and Democratization in Africa", 84.

¹⁵⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of the Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5.

¹⁵⁸ For this quotation see Jean Massamba ma Mpolo, *Le Saint Esprit Interroge les esprits* (Yaoundé: Edition Cle, 2002), 9.

¹⁵⁹ Katrien Pype. "'We need to open up the Country': Development and the Christian Key Scenario in the Social space of Kinshasa's teleserials." *Journal of African Media Studies*. Vol. 1, no. 1 (2009): 101-116.

¹⁶⁰ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 7.

¹⁶¹ Bryan Wilson, *Religious sects: a sociological study* (London: World University Library, 1970), 17.

2.5.3 Evaluation

From the above, it is useful to note firstly that the re-awakening Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo are a challenge to the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. Certain of their actions call out to mission Churches, which must then rethink their pastoral views. As Atal Sa Angang argues, “religious sects are a sign of the failure of faith and the Christian practices that we have presented and continue to present today to the eyes of the world.”¹⁶² Nevertheless, the success of these Churches strongly suggests, in this study’s view, that such people find something of value there that they do not find in the Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches. As Mbiti correctly writes “Independent Churches have not only rebelled against imported liturgies which do not give full vent to African spiritual expression, but many seem to be evolving great spontaneity of liturgical life.”¹⁶³ But this liturgy needs theological scrutiny and guidance. Nevertheless, to a significant extent, the traditional Churches remain the model that inspires these re-awakening Churches.

A negative element, however, in re-awakening Churches is that the incomplete training of some of their leaders can compromise the quality of the evangelical message in the interpretation of a biblical message. It is important that these Apostles, Prophets or Bishops receive at least a biblical training. The doctrinal lapse of the Kimbanguist Church described above is a case in point. Insufficient biblical formation of those in positions of responsibility, including catechists, lies at the basic of doctrinal distortion. Another negative aspect of these Churches is that they often occupy their faithful members day and night with chains of prayers, forgetting that work is the key to development. And, as Paul the Apostle expressly states, “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.”¹⁶⁴

From all of this, it can be concluded that the Christian religious discourse of re-awakening Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in spite of their numerical growth, lacks social action that aims at transformation or change within society. Consequently, this Christian discourse is unable to restore/liberate the people in order to reconstruct and develop the country. It is, instead, a discourse that makes people to sleep.

¹⁶² D. Atal Sa Angang, “*L’Utilisation de la Bible par et dans les Sectes Religieuses de Kinshasa*” Pp.447-448 in *Sectes, Cultures et Societes: Les Enjeux Spirituels du Temps Present. Actes du Quatrième Colloque International du CERA de Kinshasa., Novembre 1992* (Kinshasa: FCK, 1994).

¹⁶³ Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 93.

¹⁶⁴ 2 Thessalonians 3: 10.

Moreover, these Churches do not challenge the government – they are among those who legitimate the status quo. Nevertheless, these Churches are an important social phenomenon because they have emerged as important actors and powerful forces for social mobilization, in spite of both constructive and destructive ends. important social phenomenon.

2.6. Summary

This chapter has focused on the description, beliefs about social issues and evaluation of the three Christian religious groups under examination in this study. It has been shown that Catholic missionaries were the first missionaries to arrive in the Congo. Under Belgium, Catholic missions had a privileged status in contrast to the Protestant missions. As far as the current Christian religious discourse of the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, it has been indicated that by 1970, the Catholic Church had adapted its liturgy to the African context with African dance and songs, initiated by Cardinal Malula, Archbishop of Kinshasa.

With regard to social issues, the Roman Catholic Church focuses a lot on these, especially in terms of its effort to challenge the government through the messages or declarations by the bishops of the National Bishops Conference of the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, the current Christian religious discourse of the Church must continue to resist the government in order to achieve its objective, which is to restore and develop the country.

With regard to the Protestant Church, it has been shown that Protestant missions were considered to be strange missions by the colonial power, and were disadvantaged in comparison to Catholic missions. However, this divergence allowed Protestant missions to form a committee called ‘The Congo Protestant Council’ which, after independence, was changed to ‘The Church of Christ in Congo’. Nevertheless, an analysis of the current religious discourse of the Church of Christ in Congo reveals that in spite of the fact that this discourse pays attention to social issues affecting the population, there is no effort at the Protestant Church hierarchy level to challenge the government. The Protestant Church keeps silent and is content to preach instead a culture of peace in the face of the deplorable situation in the country.

In terms of Kimbanguist Church, it is clear that the clergy of the church is divided. At the present, a majority who shares the popular belief that Simon Kimbangu is God, the Holy Spirit incarnate, and a minority of educated theologians who does not shares this popular

belief. The problem now as Balz has well observed is that in the long, the greater popularity is with a Kimbanguist Church without theology abandoning the ecumenical community, and gradually becoming a Sect. Whereas the theologians will leave this Church and will bring the good part of Kimbanguist heritage into other Christian Churches.¹⁶⁵

With regard to the re-awakening Churches, it has been said that they are the fastest growing churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their numbers, which grow every day, must call out the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches, and at the same time constitute a challenge. This is because these Churches can always reveal something that the Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches cannot see. In contrast, the beliefs of the re-awakening Churches with regard to social issues differs a lot from their counterpart Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. For them, the poverty and suffering of the Congolese people are not the result of the mismanagement of public goods by the government, but of demon possession. The Christian religious discourse of the re-awakening Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo is also good in the sense that these Churches focus on the Gospel increasingly. Nevertheless, they must teach the members to not only to pray but also to work because it is the work that ensures the independence.

To sum up, the question which other groups for example the non-governmental organizations and civil society ask is: if 80 per cent of the Congolese are Christians why things are going worse like this? From this, it is today clear that there is a problem of spirituality, a problem of quality in the Congolese Church. As Kung has observed, “the great number of believers is not automatically a sign of true faith; God is not, after all on the side of the big battalions.”¹⁶⁶

Still, religious communities as Wepens et al clearly put it, “are then not only regarded as valuable for social development because of the infrastructure they can provide, but also and specifically, because of the (potential) impact they can make on the social development.”¹⁶⁷

Clearly, the Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo in general has lost most of her credibility. There are for example divisions inside the Church based on tribalism, exploitation of the members by extracting money and material goods from the members who are already

¹⁶⁵ Balz, “Kimbanguism Going Astray”, 364.

¹⁶⁶ Hans Kung, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 242.

¹⁶⁷ Wepener et al, “*The Role of Religious Ritual in Social Capital Formation for Poverty Alleviation and Social Development. Theoretical and Methodological Points of Departure of a South African Exploitation.*” *Religion & Theology* 17(2010): 61-82.

poverty-stricken, social and economical inequality within the Clergy, and sexual immorality of the clergy or Ministers. In addition, many Church leaders are collaborating with the power. Some of them are members of the majority party. So, not only the Protestant Church and Kimbanguist Church or Re-awakening Church, but also some Church leaders inside Catholic Church and even Muslim organizations have been strong supporters of regime. Currently, many pastors are working in Government cabinet, Security forces or are electioneering on behalf of Majority Party. In compensation, they are benefiting from substantial generous gifts from the regime. The following quotation of Evans and Christopher is very instructive “the State do not develop so close a relationship with dominant religions, because that can pose a threat to religious freedom.”¹⁶⁸

Having examined the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the study will now look at Reconstruction Theology, which is the focus of the next chapter.

¹⁶⁸ Carolyn Evans and Christopher Thomas, “*Church-State Relations in the European Court of Human Rights.*” Brigham Youth University Law Review, Vol. 2006, No.1 (2006): 699-725.

Chapter 3: Reconstruction Theology Approach

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on how reconstruction theology has been used by three African scholars, namely, Kä Mana, Jesse Mugambi and Charles Villa-Vicencio. I have chosen these three scholars for two reasons: Firstly, I think that they have made pioneering contributions with significant implications with regard to reconstruction theology in the African context. Secondly, the approaches of the three scholars offer the possibility of redefining a reconstructive religious discourse. The chapter will begin with a background and definitions, before examining the theological approaches of these African scholars, who have advocated for reconstruction theology as a new paradigm. The aim is twofold: to see if the examination can help in redefining reconstructive religious discourse from the point of view of these three approaches, and how the Bible could be read from a reconstructive religious perspective.

3.2 Reconstruction Theology: Background

The theology of reconstruction is a recent concept in contemporary African theological vocabulary. Reconstruction as a theological paradigm only came into being around 1990, at the time when many African countries entered in a new period of democratization with the end of dictatorships. As Dedji puts it, “it was during the symposium of the All African Conference of Churches held at Mombasa (Kenya) in 1991 that the theme of the theology of reconstruction was launched.”¹⁶⁹ At this symposium, Mugambi claimed that reconstruction must be a new priority for the African nations.¹⁷⁰ He considered the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the New World Order to be a favorable time to create a new theological paradigm from liberation to reconstruction.

¹⁶⁹ Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal in African Christian Theology* (Nairobi: Acton, 2003), 36-37.

¹⁷⁰ Jesse N. Mugambi, “*The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future.*” Pp. 29-50 in *The Church of Africa: Towards a Theology of Reconstruction*. Edited by The All African Conference of the Churches. Information Desk: Nairobi (September 1991).

According to Villa-Vicencio, reconstruction theology, as a new theology, would be able to better address the challenges of post-2 February 1990 South Africa in a different context.¹⁷¹ He argues that before 2 February 1990, theology had to respond in a resistant manner, saying ‘No’. But after this time, theology is obliged to begin the difficult task of saying ‘Yes’.¹⁷² Therefore, for both Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio the change of context required the new methods.

In Francophone Africa, unlike Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio, Kä Mana asserts that the reconstruction paradigm is the consequence of the ‘failure’ of both identity and liberation theologies to reach their goal in Africa. For Kä Mana, the quest for African identity is senseless, because of cultural and politico-economic structures which are disintegrated. In other words, Kä Mana’s concern is to bring a change in the African way of life. For that, he argues that the challenge now is to engage in a double accountability that is at the heart of the mission of the Churches for the renewal of Africa, that is: to re-evangelize the institutions and structures that determine the existence of our societies today, and to re-orient the structure of our imaginaire.¹⁷³

The word ‘imaginaire’ is commonly used to describe a virtual image. Kä Mana uses it extensively in his writings for the sake of attempting to analyze the worldview of a social group. Speaking about Africa’s reconstruction, he argues that this “reconstruction requires a transformation of our ‘imaginaire’ which consists in transforming the myths that make us dream in problems make us reflect to convert these problems that make us reflect into energies that makes us act.”¹⁷⁴ In short, it is about the change from our passive imagination into an active imagination. Biblically speaking, that implies according Kä Mana, the re-evangelization of the institutions and structures that determine the existence of Africa today, and re-orientation of the African people according to the vision of God.

¹⁷¹ 2 February 1990, is the date in which the former South African President De Klerk delivered a speech in Parliament in which he unbanned the liberation movements including their leaders. In the meantime, he also announced the probable release of Nelson Mandela from 27 years of imprisonment. This speech was seen by many South Africans as the beginning of a new era (Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 40.)

¹⁷² Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 7.

¹⁷³ Kä Mana, *L’Eglise Africaine et la Theology de la Reconstruction* (Genève: *Bulletins du Centre Protestant d’Etudes*, 1994), 39.

¹⁷⁴ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle Mourir? Bousculer l’Imaginaire Africain: Essai d’Ethique Politique* (Paris: Cerf, 1991), 211.

In the following section, I will begin by defining ‘reconstruction theology’, before examining the theological approaches advocated by the abovementioned three scholars.

3.3 Defining Reconstruction Theology

Reconstruction Theology according to Mugambi is “a process that entails a transformation of society from social ills of racial and gender prejudice coupled with economic degradation to a just and renewed community.”¹⁷⁵ For Mugambi, reconstruction theology is a process which requires the considerable efforts of the Churches, Christian organizations, and individuals who are the real agents of promoting social transformation. But, reconstruction theology is also a kind of activism in the sense that it is used as a *doing* theology.

According to Villa-Vicencio, reconstruction is “a response to the challenge of the Church in its theological responsibility to restore justice and affirm human dignity within the context of God’s reign.”¹⁷⁶ In other words, Villa-Vicencio appeals to theology to engage in dialogue with human rights, law-making, nation-building for the reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa.

Kä Mana for his part sees the theology of reconstruction as nothing other than to “reconstruct the framework of a community’s creative forces, that is our imaginaire, in order to lay the foundation of a new destiny beyond the determinism of crises.”¹⁷⁷ As such, his primary concern is to raise the conscience of Africans to the alienation aspects of contemporary life in Africa, and indicate ways to combat these conditions. So, for him, the objective of reconstruction theology is the training of ‘anti-crisis human beings’ who are equipped with new models of national ethical and spiritual conditions.¹⁷⁸

The above definitions could be summarized simply as: Reconstruction theology implies the transformation, restoration and re-orientation of the structures of society according to the vision of God. From this, I can argue that reconstruction theology is an act of liberation from a bad condition of life to a new one according to God’s vision.

¹⁷⁵ Jesse N. Mugambi, *Christian Theology & Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 29.

¹⁷⁶ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ See Valentin Dedji, “*The Ethical, Redemption of African Imaginaire: Kä Mana’s Theology of Reconstruction.*” *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol.31, No. 3 (August 2001): 254-274.

Its approach is therefore ultimately theological, and the application of biblical principles in the praxis of reconstruction is inevitable.

3.4 Theological Approaches to Reconstruction

3.4.1 Kä Mana's theological Approach to Reconstruction

My fellow countryman, Kä Mana is without doubt the prominent Francophone theologian who has contributed to reconstruction theology in Africa. It is in his 1991 book *L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir?* where Kä Mana provides the framework for his theology of reconstruction approach.¹⁷⁹ Since 1992, he has published a series of six books in which he expresses his views on the theology of reconstruction in Africa. These six books are: *Foi Africaine, Crise Africaine et Reconstruction de l'Afrique* (Lomé: HAHO/CETA.,1992); *Christ d'Afrique: Enjeux Ethiques de la Foi Africaine en Jésus Christ* (Paris: Karthala//CETA/CLE, 1993); *L'Eglise Africaine et la Théologie de la Reconstruction* (Paris: Cerf, 1993); *Chrétiens et Eglises d'Afrique: Penser l'avenir* (Yaounde/Lomé: CLE/HAHO, 1999); *Pour le Christianisme de la vie et pour l'Afrique de l'Espoir* (Paris: Karthala, 1999); and *La Nouvelle Evangélisation de l'Afrique* (Paris/Yaounde: Karthala/CLE, 2000).

The argument running through his books is that: the image that the contemporary black-African has of herself is abstract and dramatic. Africa is still struggling with numerous myths. The emergence of these myths entails the crisis of conditions of its existence, which manifests in all sectors of social life. He then proposes the transformation of our 'imaginaire' that is, to change the myths that make us problems and that must stimulate us to reflect, to convert these problems into energies that make us to act.

While Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio were motivated in their reconstruction paradigm by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the New World Order,¹⁸⁰ Kä Mana on the other hand justifies his choice of the reconstruction paradigm on the basis of the failure of both 'identity' and 'liberation' to reach their goal in Africa.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Kä Mana, *L'Eglise Africaine*, 39.

¹⁷⁹ Dedji, "The Ethical, Redemption of African Imaginaire", 257.

¹⁸⁰ Jesse N. Mugambi, *Christian Theology & Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 9.

¹⁸¹ See Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 152.

As Dedji argues, “the political liberation of most African countries has not changed the harrowing realities of the daily social life of millions of people who have been longing for ‘liberty’ and a ‘better life’.”¹⁸² Indeed, it is undoubtedly true that political liberation did not bring expected results for the majority of Africans. Everywhere in Africa, one finds the same scenario: abject poverty, conflicts, bad governance, wars, etc. that impede democratization and sustainable development. King Moshoeshe II shared the same concern when he declared that:

After more than thirty years of so-called development, millions of Africans are still constantly hungry, millions still live in entirely inadequate conditions and have grossly insufficient access to education, to health care and many basic necessities for decent living. There is ‘ample evidence’ he suggests to confirm that abject poverty in Africa has grown in proportions never experienced before.¹⁸³

From this, Kä Mana argues that “it is not only about cultural or political liberation, but the true liberation is playing at deeper level and engages all forces of creativity unanimously.”¹⁸⁴ As he himself recognizes it is not enough to cry at the liberation, and transformation of structures, but we must start a process of the unpacking of our inner life.¹⁸⁵ In this regard, Kä Mana perceives his reconstruction paradigm to be a large circle that contains two components, identity and liberation, as the matrix of its development.¹⁸⁶

He therefore asserts that there can be no reconstruction perspective without a critical appraisal and creative re-reading of identity and liberation paradigms. According to Kä Mana, “identity, liberation and reconstruction are concrete forms of self-identification and the project is of dynamic liberation from the inability of ‘our’ societies, despite a burning desire to reconstruct our destiny on new foundations.”¹⁸⁷ In order to do this, he urges us Africans to focus on the common identity of all people of the same generation in order to address their future and build the ‘scenario’ of being human.¹⁸⁸ At the same time, he recognizes that “the liberation of culture in Africa and in Asia will not be possible, unless the people’s struggle in Latin America becomes our common struggle.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 141.

¹⁸³ For this quotation, see Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-building and Human Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36.

¹⁸⁴ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 97.

¹⁸⁵ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 58.

¹⁸⁶ Kä Mana, *L’Eglise Africaine*, 9.

¹⁸⁷ See Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 108-109.

¹⁸⁸ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 139-140.

¹⁸⁹ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 150.

In fact, the struggle of liberation in Latin America is perceived as an authentic liberation, because their struggle should respond to the inhuman suffering of the Latin American people. Kä Mana is convinced that liberation, which according to him implies to liberate the African people from all alienating situations, is primarily concerned with arousing the consciousness of Africans to the alienating aspects of contemporary life in Africa, and indicating how to get out of this situation. Africa is still alienated in many situations today, Kä Mana notes, and so Africa's disalienation would have to be an effort of awareness.¹⁹⁰ In order to achieve this, he argues that "the challenge for the mission of the Churches for the renewal and reconstruction of Africa is twofold: to re-evangelize the institutions and structures that determinate the existence of our society today and re-orient the framework of our 'imaginaire'."¹⁹¹

As we can well see, it is through his research on African social, political, economic and cultural realities and his effort to unmask the alienating conditions of Africans today with a view to highlighting the existential realities of the human condition of Africans that Kä Mana has conceived his theology of reconstruction. Indeed, Kä Mana refers to the philosophical and political theory of Hannah Arendt on the conditions of human existence in order to analyse and interpret the human condition of contemporary Africa. He concludes that it is the whole condition of existence of our contemporary African that is in crisis: a crisis of creative intelligence, a crisis of action (word), a crisis of African will. These different crises he says, strike even the area of spiritual life, and the consequences are dramatic.¹⁹²

According to Kä Mana, this African crisis is not limited to only the spiritual domain; it is a crisis of even the conditions of human existence. Hence the new myths of contemporary African society that are meant as responses to this crisis of our existence. The Western myth of our cultural identity, the myth of independence, the myth of development, the myth of liberation, and the myth of democracy and political pluralism function still in the black African's imagination.¹⁹³ From this, Kä Mana seeks to reinterpret the spiritual forces in the Bible in order to regenerate the spiritual renewal, social transformation and reconstruction of Africa.

¹⁹⁰ Kä Mana, *L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 114.

¹⁹¹ Kä Mana had borrowed this 'imaginaire' from the Albert Camus's allegorical novel, the *Plague*, published in the mid-1940s, which tells the story of a fight: not a fight against a disease, not a fight against German soldiers, but a fight against indifference in the face of human suffering (see Valentin Dedji, "The Ethical Redemption of Africa Imaginaire: Kä Mana's Theology of Reconstruction." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (August 2001): 254-274.

¹⁹² Kä Mana, *L'Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 23.

He is therefore concerned with the following question: “How should Africans think and build the future of their continent?”¹⁹⁴ To do that, Kä Mana places the emphasis of the theology of reconstruction much more on the field of Christian ethics. As Dedji argues: “Kä Mana situated the perspective of the theology of reconstruction much more in the field of Christian ethics (as the utopia of the kingdom of God), than in the field of dogmatics.”¹⁹⁵

He situated his approach around two major trends of ‘identity theologies’ in Africa: ‘the theology of adaptation’ and ‘the theology of incarnation’.¹⁹⁶ According to Kä Mana, the ‘theology of adaptation’ means adapting the great affirmations of the Christian faith to African social life, while the ‘theology of incarnation’ is a theology of dialogue between Africans and Christ. This encounter between Africans and Christ offers a possibility for the reconstruction of a new world rich in possibilities of love, justice, solidarity and abundance of life.¹⁹⁷ According to Kä Mana, the purpose of a ‘Christology of abundant life’ from the perspective of the reconstruction paradigm is “to take major steps forward in the understanding of the practical implications of the dialogue that has taken place up to the present between Christ and Africans.” This Christology of abundant life is for Kä Mana his “ultimate axiom”.¹⁹⁸ As Dedji comments, the “Christology of abundant life implies that ‘Christ has become our spirit’ as He himself has been ‘transformed’ by God ‘in order to create abundant life’ wherever powers of death reign.”¹⁹⁹

Schnackenburg for his part observes that, the Christology of abundant life is the life that Christ bestows on whoever believes in Him. It is a life that has its indestructible power and that survives beyond bodily death. It is the attainment of that sphere in which God reigns; hence the achievement of fullness and abundance.²⁰⁰ However, Kä Mana sees ‘abundant life’ in Christ as much more than this. As Dedji puts it:

According to Kä Mana, ‘abundant life in Christ’ in the context of anti-life forces in Africa, is not to be understood as a mere aspiration for an economical prosperity or for a material security in a spiritual atmosphere; rather a re-orientation of our struggles not as passive spectators, but as actors for the advent of a more dignified

¹⁹³ Kä Mana, *L’Afrique va-t-elle mourir?*, 53-108.

¹⁹⁴ Kä Mana, *Foi Chrétienne*, 29.

¹⁹⁵ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 119.

¹⁹⁶ See Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 109.

¹⁹⁷ Kä Mana, *Foi Chrétienne*, 42.

¹⁹⁸ Kä Mana, *Ethique Ecologique et Reconstruction de l’Afrique* (Bafousam: IPCRE, 1997), 7.

¹⁹⁹ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 129.

²⁰⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John. Vol. 2* (London: Buens & Oates, 1980), 293.

humanity. The question of ‘abundant life in Christ’ encompasses three dimensions namely: a material, a spiritual and an ethical dimension.²⁰¹

It is in this last sense that we must understand the question of ‘abundant life in Christ’ and to give it its complete meaning in the contemporary African context. From the above, we can see that Kä Mana has the firm conviction that in order to get out of the prevailing crises in Africa and so to reconstruct African societies on a new basis, the major task of the theology of reconstruction will consist of adopting the ethical standpoint offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ, as a way and means to explore new perspectives of creativity, energy and dynamism with regard to the problems found in African societies.²⁰²

Like other scholars who have advocated for a reconstruction paradigm, Kä Mana also views the book of Nehemiah as the starting point of spiritual renewal and the foundation of his reconstruction theology. He argues that the cry of Nehemiah: ‘Let’s start rebuilding’ is a cardinal axiom of reconstruction theology, and perceives Nehemiah’s restorative endeavor as a profoundly motivating initiative.²⁰³ From his reading of the book of Nehemiah, Kä Mana identifies three major stages in the reconstruction process: the first is the rebuilding of God’s temple; the second is the erection and restoration of the walls of the entire city; and the third is the rebuilding of the city, which helped the people of Israel to become committed afresh to their covenant with God and recall the powerful memories of the history of their community.²⁰⁴

In this regard, Kä Mana therefore defines the four principles of his reconstruction paradigm for Africa. These four principles are:

- 1) Rebuilding the consciences of builders who are themselves forged by a vision of God’s utopia;
- 2) Re-forging a new spirit which carries the energies that move through people’s history;
- 3) Recharging an imagination capable of escaping from ethnicity and tribalism;
- 4) Reconstructing a new institution proportional to the dimensions of the conscience, the spirit and the imagination, which our faith in God requires in order to put an end to crises.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 128.

²⁰² For this quotation, see Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 120.

²⁰³ Kä Mana, *Foi Chrétienne*, 161.

²⁰⁴ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 122.

²⁰⁵ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 123-124.

These four principles for the reconstruction of Africa can be summarized as follows: Reconstruction implies to “reconstruct the framework of a community’s creative forces, that is its imaginaire, in order to lay the foundation for a new destiny beyond the determinism of crises.”²⁰⁶

To sum up, it can be argued that the reconstruction theology for Africa advocated by Kä Mana is relevant. For one thing, it tries to awaken the conscience of Africans to the condition of life of their existence by means of ethical principles inspired by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and at the same time, he aims at the transformation and reconstruction of a new Africa. For that, the responsibility which is at the heart of Africa according Kä Mana is the re-evangelization of the institutions and structures that determine the existence of African societies and re-orientation of the global imaginaire of contemporary Africans.

Nevertheless, Kä Mana’s approach to reconstruction is not immune to criticism. For Dedji, Kä Mana’s point of view is sometimes universal or better interdisciplinary.²⁰⁷ My criticism of Kä Mana is that in his approach to reconstruction, he does not speak about reconciliation. In my view, reconciliation is important in the process of reconstruction especially in the African context where social relations have been destroyed in the course of history. For example, the reconciliation between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda is important in order to end the war to the East. Then, the case of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a good example.

3.4.2 Mugambi’s theological Approach to Reconstruction

Like Kä Mana in Francophone Africa, Mugambi is the first scholar to call for reconstruction in Anglophone Africa. As Dedji points out, “it was during a Symposium convened by the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1991 at Mombasa (Kenya), that Mugambi appealed to African theologians to shift their emphasis from the hitherto prevailing inculturation-liberation theology to a ‘theology of reconstruction’.”²⁰⁸ During this symposium, Mugambi stated the following:

²⁰⁶ Kä Mana, *Foi Chretienne*, 164.

²⁰⁷ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 152.

²⁰⁸ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 47.

In my book *From Liberation to Reconstruction* I have highlighted the significance of the end of the Cold War as a beginning of a new era in Africa, in which African scholars could reflect critically and retrospectively, without the fear of being branded with another label in the ideological witch-hunting that characterized the Cold War.²⁰⁹

From this quotation, one can see that Mugambi proposes the reconstruction paradigm because he views the ‘New World Order’ and the ‘The End of the Cold War’²¹⁰ as important historical moments for creative opportunities and challenges to develop ‘a new vision’ and a ‘new theology and strategy’ for action.²¹¹

The new theology is the theology of reconstruction, which he defines as reconstructive rather than destructive, inclusive rather than exclusive, complementary rather than competitive, integrative rather than disintegrative, people-centered rather than institution-centered, deed-oriented rather than word-oriented, participatory rather than autocratic, generative rather than degenerative, future-sensitive rather than past-sensitive, co-operative rather than confrontational, and consultative rather than impositional.²¹² In this regard, Mugambi asserts that the ‘new vision’ and ‘new strategy’ will require resources, and the resources for this re-interpretation are a multidisciplinary analysis involving social scientists, philosophers, creative writers and artists, and biological and physical scientists.²¹³ For this reason, he asserts that the task of African social reconstruction is by definition both multi-disciplinary and ecumenical.²¹⁴ As such, the challenge for Africans and Christians, according to Mugambi, is “to revive the process of promoting visible expressions of united Christian witness, fellowship and services between and amongst Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, Charismatic, Orthodox and Independents.”²¹⁵ Mugambi is himself concerned with the critical question: ‘How can Christianity in post-colonial Africa help Africans to outgrow the vicious circles of crises?’²¹⁶ His optimism about the end of the Cold War pushes him to emphasize that there is evidence to support the reconstruction of social structures, helping Africans to re-affirm their cultural reality and consciousness and provide a springboard for the revitalization

²⁰⁹ Mugambi, *Christian Theology*, 9.

²¹⁰ The end of the Cold War, for Mugambi and other scholars like Villa-Vicencio, implies the events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall; the demise of Apartheid in South Africa; the end of most dictatorship regimes in Third World countries; and the disintegration of the Union of Soviet States of Russia (See Jesse N. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction* (Nairobi:East Africa Educational Publishers, 1995), x

²¹¹ Jesse N. Mugambi, “*Christian Mission and Social Transformation after the Cold War: An African Perspective.*” *Journal of Reconstructive Theology*. Vol..4, No.2 (December 1998), 68.

²¹² Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, xv.

²¹³ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 40.

²¹⁴ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 2.

²¹⁵ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 172.

of Africa's economy, politics and social life.²¹⁷ Indeed, as noted in the previous section, it is the whole condition of the existence of Africans that is in crisis. The most crucial social, cultural, political crises in Africa today are: abject poverty and misery which our societies are confronted, and the powerlessness of our societies in the face of moral decay, illness, wars etc. That is a serious multidimensional crisis which constitutes a great problem for our society today.

There is certainly a cause for despair but there is also a reason to be full of hope as Ka Mana argues in the following: "these Africans once again want to realise their vision for the continent and build together a destiny of happiness, justice, freedom, and responsibility."²¹⁸ Consequently, Mugambi expresses his conviction that the "21st century should be a century of reconstruction in Africa."²¹⁹ From this, we can see Mugambi's commitment to ecumenism, which he considers to be very important in the process of social reconstruction in Africa. As Dedji correctly states, "Mugambi's commitment to Ecumenism is unmistakable. So is his concept of the role of theologians as educators and promoters of an ecumenical spirit that would transcend ethical and racial barriers among the Christian Community."²²⁰

Like Kä Mana, Mugambi also argues that "the central biblical text for African theology of reconstruction in the 21st century will be the book of Nehemiah."²²¹ Mugambi goes on to assert that African theologians and Christians need to be inspired by Nehemiah, who was concerned about his homeland which was in a terrible situation while he was still in exile in Babylon.

However, in his search for alternative biblical motifs and metaphors, Mugambi asserts that "as we enter the 21st century, the challenge is to discern other biblical motifs relevant for a theology of transformation and reconstruction, such as: the exilic motif (Jeremiah); the Deuteronomic motif (Josiah); the restorative motif (Isaiah); and the reconstructive motif (Haggai and Nehemiah)."²²² Mugambi focuses specifically on the text of Nehemiah as a post-exilic text appropriated for reconstruction theology.

²¹⁶ Mugambi, "The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future," 30.

²¹⁷ Mugambi, *Christian Theology & Social Reconstruction*, 37.

²¹⁸ Kä Mana, *Christians and Churches of Africa: Envisioning the Future* (Yaoundé: CLE, 2002), 2.

²¹⁹ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 50.

²²⁰ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 64.

²²¹ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 166.

²²² Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 39.

However, he also uses different texts from different socio-political contexts. From his reading of the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, Mugambi discerns the biblical metaphor of light and salt, which according to him could play a significant role in Christian theology and the Christian community.²²³

It is worth noting here that Mugambi identifies four modes of reconstruction: personal reconstruction, cultural reconstruction, ecclesiastical reconstruction, and socio-political reconstruction.²²⁴ Personal reconstruction is, according to Mugambi, the starting point in social reconstruction. He argues that Jesus teaches that constructive change must start from within (Luke 18: 9-14; Matthew 23: 1-13; Luke 2: 13, 18: 9-14).

Under cultural reconstruction Mugambi identifies politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics and religion as the components of culture. For all these components, reconstruction is necessary. He maintains however that in the relationship between the gospel and culture, the gospel must have the upper hand and thus challenge every culture.

Ecclesiastic reconstruction for Mugambi concerns dimensions such as doctrinal teaching, social rehabilitation, and ritual celebration. He includes equally the management structures, financial policies, human resources development activities within Churches.

Socio-political reconstruction Mugambi argues is concerned with the crises facing Africa today. For that, he asks the question why is there economic poverty in Africa? He mentions that a political crisis is due to the lack of democracy. He argues that the food shortage in Africa need not be a perpetual crisis. Thus, he suggests the Church has a major role to play in order to address this crisis.²²⁵

To sum up, Mugambi's social theology reconstruction paradigm is also relevant to Africa, in the sense that it helps to understand African realities in order to create a model for a new African society.

²²³ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal*, 8.

²²⁴ For this quotation see Elelwani Farisani, "Transformation and Renewal in Contemporary Africa (Rom. 12:1-2) in *Text and Context in the New Testament Hermeneutics*. Edited by JNK Mugambi and Johannesburg A. Smit (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 64.

²²⁵ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 15, 42, 68 and 156.

In this regard, he introduces his reconstruction as a new paradigm for African Christian theology and explores the role of Christian theology in the social reconstruction of Africa.²²⁶ However, in his proposal for a departure from liberation to reconstruction, Mugambi does not seem to point out the role of liberation and reconciliation in the process of reconstruction of Africa. In my view, it is when reconciliation is done that true reconstruction can ensue.

Maluleke is one of those who have criticised the project of reconstruction theology for having minimised the role played by the theology of liberation in South Africa. He argues that:

the proposed theology of reconstruction attempts to do the impossible, i.e. proposing a theology of liberation from the powerful centre. What is perhaps even more treacherous is the fact that those calling for a shift have a consistent record of their rejecting or ignoring black and African theologies of liberation, for example. How credible then is their call for a change?²²⁷

In short, I am of the view that liberation and reconciliation should be the starting point of real reconstruction. That means that liberation and reconciliation should be the framework in which reconstruction takes place.

3.4.3 Villa-Vicencio's theological Approach to Reconstruction

Charles Villa-Vicencio is also among the African scholars who were early advocates of the paradigm of reconstruction for Africa. In his 1992 book entitled *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-building and Human Rights*, he understands reconstruction to be:

a response to the challenge of the Church, whose theological task is to restore justice and affirm human dignity within the context of God's impending reign...in ensuring that in the process of reconstruction nations are able to turn away from greed, domination and exploitation, in whatever clothes they may appear, to an age of communal sharing and personal fulfillment.²²⁸

The context which motivated Villa-Vicencio here was first the changing situation in South Africa before the democratic elections of 1994, and secondly the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. According to Villa-Vicencio, as it became clear that apartheid was coming to an end, it was thought that a new theological paradigm beyond liberation theology

²²⁶ Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, x.

²²⁷ Tinyiko Maluleke, "The Proposal for a Theology of Reconstruction: A critical Appraisal." *Missionalia* Vol.22, No. 2 (August 1994), 245-258.

²²⁸ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 2.

would be necessary. He declared that “the old is dying even though the new is not yet born, and there is no clear indication what form the new society might take.”²²⁹

In this context, Villa-Vicencio proposes reconstruction theology as a new theology which will better address the challenge of 2 February 1990, because liberation theology has not produced the strategies of reconstruction, and consequently, a new metaphor for reconstruction must be explored.²³⁰ According to Villa-Vicencio, the challenge now facing the Church in South Africa is different from that facing it before 2 February 1990. He argues that “before 2 February 1990, theology had to respond in a resistant manner – that is, saying ‘No’ to all oppression. Today, after 2 February 1990, the need to move from saying ‘No’ to saying ‘Yes’ has arisen.”²³¹

From this, a theology of reconstruction, according to Villa-Vicencio, “involves the task of breaking down prejudices of race, class and sexism, and also the task of creating an all-inclusive (non-racial and democratic) society, built on the very values denied the majority of people under apartheid.”²³² Villa-Vicencio argues that reconstruction theology must be based on a post-exilic metaphor, as opposed to liberation theology’s exodus metaphor. In this regard, he asserts that the metaphoric use of post-exilic theology can be appropriated as a prophetic theology of reconstruction and nation-building in Africa. Moreover, Villa-Vicencio bases his reconstruction theology on an ethical principle which he calls ‘middle axioms’.²³³

According to this theory, ‘middle axioms’ are principles evolving during the process of social reconstruction, which society needs at a given time in order to facilitate social reconstruction. Villa-Vicencio argues that “these ‘middle axioms’ or ethical principles are under the renewing power of the Gospel, which demands more than a society can deliver at a particular time.”²³⁴ In asserting that reconstruction theology is a post-exilic theology, Villa-Vicencio argues that this theology should be interdisciplinary and emerge at the interface between theology and law, economics, political science and related disciplines.²³⁵

²²⁹ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 2.

²³⁰ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 13.

²³¹ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 7.

²³² For this quotation, see Elelwani Farisani, “The Ideologically biased use of *Ezra-Nehemiah* in a quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction.” *Old Testament Essays (OTE)* 15, No. 3 (2002): 628-646.

²³³ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 280.

²³⁴ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 9.

²³⁵ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 276.

However, as Farisani has remarked, Villa-Vicencio does not use Ezra-Nehemiah alone as a basis for a theology of prophetic reconstruction and political stability, but rather sees it as part of other texts, namely: Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah.²³⁶ In so doing, Villa-Vicencio uses these other texts together with Ezra-Nehemiah as a basis for his reconstruction. These texts are, for example, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah for rebuilding the temple, and Isaiah for ethical concerns.

In conclusion, it is correct to note that Villa-Vicencio's reconstruction proposal is also relevant, because his theology is 'nation-building theology', which has the capacity to build the nation through lawmaking, by focusing on the role of law in relation to human rights.²³⁷ His appeal to engage theology in dialogue with human rights, law-making, nation-building is important for the reconstruction of not only a new South Africa, but also other African countries as well.

Nevertheless, as has already been mentioned with regard to Kä Mana and Mugambi, Villa-Vicencio, although he advocates a move from liberation to reconstruction, he does not give a detailed explanation of liberation in order to support his thesis. Farisani has criticised Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio for their use of Ezra-Nehemiah in the quest for reconstruction theology. He argues that "Villa-Vicencio includes in his post-exilic metaphor different texts from different socio-political contexts without doing a sociological analysis of them."²³⁸ A sociological analysis according to Farisani is a reading in which the interpreter engages in an in-depth manner with the text. A sociological analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah (and other Biblical texts) allows one to identify the ideology in the text.

By means of a sociological analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah, Farisani first identifies that the text has an exclusivist ideology biased against the am-haaretz (people of the land), in favour of the returned exiles. Secondly, he demonstrates that Ezra-Nehemiah is a product of different authors. And third he concludes that a sociological analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah goes on to analyze the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah and also provide a socio-historical analysis of the conflict between the am-haaretz and the returned exiles.²³⁹

²³⁶ Farisani, "The Ideologically biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah", 630.

²³⁷ Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-building*, 29.

²³⁸ Elelwani Farisani, "The Ideological biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction", 636.

²³⁹ Farisani, "The ideological biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah", 643.

Farisani, therefore, is against any uncritical reading of the biblical text which does not engage in an in-depth manner with the text. Farisani thus criticises Villa-Vicencio because by not critically examining the Ezra-Nehemiah text, he has failed to see the ideology behind the conflict between the returned exiles and the am-haaretz.²⁴⁰

Indeed, Ezra 1-6 tells us that on returning from Babylon, the returned exiles (all the Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.) embarked on the rebuilding of the temple at the exclusion of the am-haaretz (those Jews who did not go into Babylonian, but remained behind in Palestine). This exclusion provoked the conflict between the returned exiles and the am-haaretz. Therefore, Villa-Vicencio uses different biblical texts and socio-political contexts to justify his reconstruction theology. Nevertheless, these texts are not sufficiently developed by means of an in-depth reading of the text.

However, I am of the view that the main reason that these three scholars do not engage in an in-depth reading of the text is that they are not biblical scholars. Nevertheless, this fact should not be considered as a weakness at all. According to Farisani, “these scholars approach the subject from the point of view of systematic theology, and exegesis remains a primary concern for biblical scholars.”²⁴¹ Farisani is a biblical scholar and also a reconstructionist. As such, he engages in an extensive exegesis of the text in order to identify the ideology embedded within it. In his use of the Ezra-Nehemiah text in the quest for an African theology of reconstruction, he observes the following steps which I shall adapt and develop in my attempt to do a reconstructive reading of a New Testament text:

- 1) A sociological analysis of the text
 - Introduction
 - Ezra-Nehemiah text
 - Ideology in the Ezra-Nehemiah text
- 2) Reading the Ezra-Nehemiah text against the grain
- 3) Conclusion

In sum, in the form of a table, here are the tenets of these three scholars:

²⁴⁰ Farisani, “*The Ideologically biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 633.

	Kä Mana	Mugambi	Villa-Vicencio
Motivation	Kä Mana is motivated by the consequence of the failure of both identity and liberation theology	Mugambi is motivated by the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the new world order	Villa-Vicencio is motivated by the changing situation in South Africa and Eastern Europe
Description	Reconstruction is the framework of a community's creative forces, that is its imaginaire, in order to lay the foundations of a new destiny beyond the determinism of crises.	Reconstruction is reconstructive rather than destructive, inclusive rather than exclusive; proactive rather than reactive	Reconstruction is a response to the challenge of the Church, whose theological task is to restore justice and affirm human dignity within the context of God's impeding reign
Challenge	The challenge for the mission of the churches for renewal and reconstruction is to re-evangelise the institutions and structures that determine the existence of our society and re-orient the framework of our imaginaire	The challenge for African and Christian witness is to revive the process of promoting visible expressions of united Christian witness, fellowship and service between and among Protestants, Catholics, Charismatics, Orthodox and Independents	The challenge is to move from saying 'No' to saying 'Yes'
Task	The major task of the theology of reconstruction is to re-adopt the ethical standpoint offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ.	The task of African social reconstruction is multi-disciplinary and ecumenical	The task is the breaking down of prejudices of race, class and sexism and also the task of creating an all-inclusive society built on Christian values.
Texts	Reconstruction based on the post-exilic metaphor of Ezra-Nehemiah	Reconstruction based on the post-exilic metaphor of Ezra-Nehemiah and other biblical motifs and metaphors: Exilic motif; Deuteronomic motif; restorative motif; and reconstructive motif in OT and NT.	Reconstruction based on a post-exilic metaphor together with other texts: Haggai, Zechariah and Isaiah
Principles	4 principles of Reconstruction 1. Rebuild conscience of builders 2. Reforging a new spirit 3. Recharging an imaginaire capable of escaping 4. Reconstructing new institutions	4 principles of Reconstruction 1. Personal reconstruction 2. Cultural reconstruction 3. Ecclesiastic reconstruction 4. Socio-political reconstruction	Interdisciplinary Reconstruction that emerges at the interface between theology and law, economics, political science and related disciplines.

3.5 A Critical Assessment of Reconstruction Theology as Proposed by Kä Mana, Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio

The aim of this section is to highlight the main points in the three approaches to reconstruction, and to see if they can be adopted and applied to reconstructive religious discourse.

²⁴¹ Elelwani Farisani, "Transformation and Renewal in Contemporary Africa (Rom 12:1-2)" in *Text and Context in the New Testament Hermeneutics*. Edited by Jesse N. Mugambi and Johannes A Smit (Nairobi:

3.5.1 Similarities and Differences

The above examination of the three approaches revealed that:

- All three scholars agree that the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century created a new context; and in this new context, the role played by liberation and inculturation theologies has become inadequate, and for this reason, this new context requires a new paradigm.
- All advocate reconstruction as a new paradigm following liberation.
- All argue that reconstruction theology is based on a post-exilic metaphor, with Ezra-Nehemiah as a basic biblical text.

One can also identify some differences between Kä Mana, Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio. One difference is that for the first scholar, the challenge is to re-evangelize institutions and re-orient the framework. The focus is on re-adopting the ethical standpoint offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Kä Mana's focus is more spiritual, he aims at the re-evangelization of Africa. For him, reconstruction must start inside. He believes unconditionally in the power of the gospel to reconstruct Africa.

For the second scholar, the challenge is to revive the process of promoting visible expressions of a united Christianity, and the focus is multi-disciplinary and ecumenical. Mugambi is also spiritual, but he is equally socio-cultural and political.

For the third scholar, the challenge is to move from saying 'No' to saying 'Yes', and the focus is on breaking down barriers of race, class and sex. Villa-Vicencio is more political than Kä Mana and Mugambi. His reconstruction is more focussed on the role of law or justice in relation with human rights.

3.5.2 Strengths and weaknesses

Firstly, the strength of all three approaches is that they all aim at the social transformation and renewal of Africa by awakening the conscience of Africans. Secondly, reconstruction theology as a proactive paradigm, suggests an action that not only denounces ills, but also removes them from society.²⁴² As has already been mentioned, liberation and reconciliation are two other facets of reconstruction.

Acton Publishers, 2004), 78.

²⁴² Farisani, "*Transformation and Renewal in Contemporary Africa*, 78.

I agree with Farisani that

Different contexts entail different methodologies and focuses. Liberation theology's focus would be on making the word of God address the plight of the poor in the context of oppression and exploitation during colonialism. On the other hand, reconstruction theology in post-colonial social reconstruction suggests a proactive action that would not only denounce poverty, but that would also remove it from society.²⁴³

3.6 What is Reconstruction Theology all About?

Having analyzed and assessed the three approaches to reconstruction, it is now appropriate to show what reconstruction theology is all about. From the above analysis, it is possible to suggest the following definition: Reconstruction theology is a public theology in the sense that it strives to make a transformative impact on society by bringing the Christian values into the public arena. Speaking about Public Theology Gerhard Sauter argues that theology is then judged mainly, if not exclusively, by its effects on communal life and public.²⁴⁴ In this view, Christians have a concrete public responsibility within the modern world as agents of change within the multiple sphere of responsibility that they are given within a complex civil society.²⁴⁵

To summarize what reconstruction theology is all about biblically, one can say that reconstruction theology has three elements:

- 1) Reconstruction theology is a theology that has the task to construct a renewed society.
- 2) Reconstruction theology aims first for the renewal of man/woman.
- 3) Its ethical principle derives from the Bible.

²⁴³ Farisani, "Transformation and Renewal in Contemporary Africa", 78.

²⁴⁴ Gerhard Sauter, *Protestant Theology at the Crossroads: How to face the Crucial Tasks for Theology in the Twenty-First Century*. Michigan: Williams B. Eerdmans, 2007, 155.

²⁴⁵ Scott R. Paet, *Exodus Church and Civil Society: Public Theology and Social Theory in the work of Jürgen Moltmann*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2008, 54.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has attempted to provide the background to and a definition of reconstruction theology. That was followed by an examination of the three theological approaches to reconstruction advocated respectively by Kä Mana of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jesse Mugambi of Kenya, and Charles Villa-Vicencio of South Africa. Afterwards, it conducted an appraisal of the reconstruction theology paradigms proposed by the three scholars. From this assessment, one can understand what reconstruction theology is all about.

It has been indicated that reconstructive theology is in Africa only about twenty years old. This means that it is still in the process of maturing into a formidable theology from which the rest of the Christian world can benefit. From a biblical studies perspective, the present study offers one small contribution towards that ultimate goal.

Kä Mana, Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio all advocate reconstruction as a new paradigm and a new theology that moves from liberation to reconstruction, and so should be able to address the African contemporary crisis. The strength of the reconstruction paradigm of the three scholars is that they all aim at the social transformation and renewal of African society.

The reconstruction paradigm is viewed as being something proactive, which not only denounces ills, but also attempts to remove them from society and in the same breath offer clear programs for the sake of progress.

Nonetheless, this study contends that reconstruction theology must consider the reconciliation as another facet for a way toward a real reconstruction. This is correct because there can be no meaningful reconstruction without reconciliation.

Jones reminds that South Africa Blacks and few Whites came to what is often seen as a contemporary political miracle built on a theology of truth, reconciliation and forgiveness. He goes on that instead of descending into a cauldron of vengeance and hate, South Africa turned to reconciliation²⁴⁶. It is without doubt that it is the responsibility of the Church to reconcile the humans. In the case of Democratic Republic of Congo, since the Independence there has been a kind of apartheid. The richest province of Katanga seceded from other provinces. The

²⁴⁶ Parrish W. Jones, "Nonviolence Theological Perspective." Church and Society: Journal of Just Thought. Vol. 96 (2005-2006): 56-63.

assassination of the Prime Minister Lumumba and his colleagues led to an enduring rebellion throughout the country- During the Mobutu's regime separation between the rich and poor, the political leaders and remaining of the population- became more remarkable. After the overthrow of Mobutu's regime, the country was divided into the rule of three rebellious movements. And since the independence up to now, the country has experienced massive violation of human rights. For example, massacres, rapes, extortions of funds and properties. Consequently, the country desperately needs reconciliation for a suitable reconstruction. But, for this reconciliation to be effective should integrate a spiritual dimension by helping people to be reconciled first with God and then with one another.

After having examined the Reconstruction Theology Approach I will now go to the next chapter which is Reading the Bible from a Reconstructive Perspective.

Chapter 4: Reading the Bible from a Reconstructive Religious Perspective

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on how the Bible can be read from a reconstructive religious perspective. The analysis strives to develop a reconstructive reading of the New Testament from the example of Farisani's reading of Ezra-Nehemiah and Romans. I am referring to Farisani because he is nearly the only one among the reconstructionists, who engages in a solid analysis of the text. The others of course use different texts in their reconstruction paradigms, but without doing a solid analysis of these texts.²⁴⁷

Moreover, as was already argued in chapter 1, the Bible's potential role in the context of the reconstruction of post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo may not be taken lightly. From this perspective, the biblical texts of Ezra-Nehemiah and the Epistle to the Romans therefore open a variety of windows on the issue of reconstruction which will, hopefully, be applicable in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The chapter is divided into four parts: the first part focuses on how Elelwani Farisani reads the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, the second deals with how he reads the text of Romans 12: 1-2, the third part of the chapter focuses on my own reading Romans 12: 1-2 from a reconstructive religious perspective, and finally in the fourth part I will investigate the ethical exhortation and moral formation in early Christianity.

4.2 Farisani's Reading of Ezra-Nehemiah

When one observes carefully Farsani's reading of Ezra-Nehemiah, one can discern two sides of one coin: the first deals with a sociological analysis of the text, and the second is a reading the text against the grain.

²⁴⁷ De Gruchy have made the same observation when he asserted that: "The South African theological environment lacks clear and direct biblical pointers for a useful and contextual discussion on reconciliation, reform, reconstruction, redress and transformation, because it is not based on solid exegesis of biblical texts and does not serve the Community as a whole." (John. W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation of peoples: Challenge to the Church* (Mayknoll.: Orbis Books/ Boston Theological Institute, 1997), 450-451.

The aim of a sociological analysis of the text according to Farisani is, to disclose the author's ideological agenda embedded within the text. The aim of reading the text against the grain is to retrieve the voice of the marginalized poor within the text, and all those who have been silenced by the author of the text. Moreover, reading the text against the grain (ideological reading) is a reading strategy for approaching the text, in which the interpreter focuses on the issues related to class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, social locations within the text.²⁴⁸ The objective of this reading is to contextualise some issues from a sociological analysis of the text, which could be used in a theology of reconstruction.

Some scholars however, have begun to turn their attention to such reading strategies. For them, they think that reading against the grain, instead of being a sign of suspicion to the text it may be rather a way of disclosing a wider range of possibilities in the text. Clines expresses this idea as follows:

We need not suppose that reading against the grain of the text is a sign of disrespect to the text. What is disrespectful to the text is to suppose that it will say what we would like it to say. Nor is it harmful to the Church or the synagogue to hear of readings against the grain. We should not assume that 'believing communities' always want to hear, or should hear, only the ideology of the text being rehearsed. Perhaps they also need to know what their texts are capable of, what unorthodox and unconventional meanings they can suggest, and what a large element of choice there is in any decision to take the text's perspective as the definitive words.²⁴⁹

4.2.1 A Sociological Analysis of the Text of Ezra-Nehemiah

According to Farisani, the aim of a sociological analysis is "to begin with the process of unearthing the author's ideological agenda embedded within the text."²⁵⁰ According to him, a sociological analysis of Ezra-Nehemiah text shows that there are two groups identified in the text, namely: the returned exiles and the am-haaretz (people of the land). As Farisani writes, "the term 'returned exiles' refers to all the Jews who were taken into exile by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E., and returned back home with the assistance of the Persian King Cyrus in 539 B.C.E., while the am-haaretz are those Jews who did not go into Babylonian exile but stayed in Palestine."²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Alain Cooper, "Hagar in and out of Context," Union Seminar Quarterly Review 55, No.1&2 (2001): 35-46.

²⁴⁹ David Clines A. (ed.), *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supp. 205 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 192.

²⁵⁰ Elelwani Farisani, "The use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (July 2003):27-50.

²⁵¹ Farisani, "The use of Ezra-Nehemiah", 35.

Farisani infers that the returned exiles were probably composed essentially of Jews, Judah and Benjamin, the Nobles and Officers, and the Holy Race.²⁵² Nevertheless, to explore the question of the returned exiles, if we go to the primary texts, Ezra 2: 1-70 and Nehemiah 7: 1-73, and also the scholarly literature, there is up to now no agreement concerning the number of returned exiles.²⁵³ However, Clines argues that “returned exiles, by this phrase the whole community whether they or their ancestors had ever been in exile, is designated by Ezra and the chronicler, it is equivalent to ‘the people of Israel’ (9: 1); ‘Israel’ (10: 2); or all men of Judah and Benjamin (10: 9).”²⁵⁴

The returned exiles are classified according to families and towns, Ezra has used the name of families to which those returned exiles belonged as a means of identification.²⁵⁵ In addition, Clines states that the am-haaretz cannot be clearly identified with the Persian official in Samaria, whose later antagonism to the Jews is dealt with in vv. 7-23, and certainly not (as is often done) with the Samaritans of a much later time. According to him, the ‘people of the land’ were colonists of the former northern kingdom of Israel, imported from some other part of this empire by the Assyrian King Esarhaddon (681-669 B.C.E.) to settle the land left vacant by the deportation to Assyria after the fall of Samaria (721 B.C.E.).²⁵⁶ From the above brief review, it is clear that there is no unanimity on this issue due to the manner in which each author interprets the text, and also the question becomes complicated because the two texts (Ezra-Nehemiah) do not present the same data.

4.2.2 Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah

The word ‘ideology’ contains several denotations. It may be defined as “a set of ideas serving the interests of a particular social group.”²⁵⁷ In modern thought, ideology has been defined as the set of ideas that legitimate a dominant political power.²⁵⁸ Viewed from a biblical perspective, ideological criticism pursues two aims: to read the biblical text for its ideological content and, secondly, to grasp the ideological character of contemporary reading

²⁵² Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 35-37.

²⁵³ See for example Fredrick C. Holmgren, *Israel Alive again: Ezra-Nehemiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 14; David J. A. Clines, *New Century Bible: Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther* (Marshall: Eerdmans, 1984), 44; Mark A. Throuveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah Interpretation: A Bible commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 18-19.

²⁵⁴ Clines D. J., *New Century Bible: Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther* (Marshall: Eerdmans, 1984), 124.

²⁵⁵ Mark Throuveit A., *Nehemiah Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 47.

²⁵⁶ Clines, *Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther*, 72.

²⁵⁷ Clines, *Interested Parties*, 10.

²⁵⁸ Clines, *Interested Parties*, 24.

strategies.²⁵⁹ From this point of view, Farisani states that a sociological analysis of the Ezra-Nehemiah text shows clearly that Ezra-Nehemiah is ideologically biased against the am-haaretz. Indeed, the text of Ezra-Nehemiah is coloured by an exclusivist ideology which is biased in favour of the returned exiles, but is against the am-haaretz.

The text expressly says that “when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the Lord, the God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the heads of the families and said, ‘let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’”²⁶⁰ Ideologically, as Farisani argues the people of the land are not adversaries in the first time, it is only when they were excluded from the building process that they displayed an adversarial attitude.²⁶¹ This refusal then created resentment and hostility among the am-haaretz, and this was the main cause of the conflict which led to the am-haaretz’s opposition to their exclusion. But the author of the text ideologically supports and promotes the exclusion of the am-haaretz by the returned exiles from the rebuilding process.

On the other hand, I think that this refusal of the am-haaretz by the returned exiles finds its foundation in the worship of Yahweh expressed in Deuteronomy 6: 4 (“Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one”). As Clines also correctly argues, for the returned exiles, the answer was clear, that since Yahweh demanded exclusive worship, and moreover had driven his people into exile because of disobedience, the returned exiles were obliged to separate themselves from their enemies, those who did not share their understanding of Yahweh’s exclusive claims.²⁶²

In short, the sociological analysis of the Ezra-Nehemiah text reveals that Ezra-Nehemiah’s ideology is an exclusivist ideology biased against the am-haaretz but in favour of the returned exiles. According to Farisani, such a sociological analysis of the exclusivist ideology of Ezra-Nehemiah text is important in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction because, it enables us to retrieve the ideology in the text and read the text against the grain. In the following point, I will review the second part of Farisani’s reading of Ezra-Nehemiah, which is reading the Ezra-Nehemiah text against the grain.

²⁵⁹ Clines, *Interested Parties*, 24.

²⁶⁰ Ezra 4: 1-3.

²⁶¹ Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 39-40.

4.2.3 Reading the Ezra-Nehemiah text against the grain

As it has been noticed above, the aim of reading the text against the grain is to retrieve the voice of the marginalized poor within the text and from this, to contextualize issues arising from the sociological analysis of the text, which could be used in a theology of reconstruction. In this regard, Farisani focuses on the following three issues within Ezra-Nehemiah: Ethnicity, foreign debt, and women oppression.

4.2.3.1 Ethnicity

Adorno et al, have found that ethnocentric people had high respect for their own social group, its norms and its values, while they reject out-groups in general.²⁶³ This phenomenon has been detected in many countries where certain ethnic groups have been denied their rights by the dominant group. In the Ezra-Nehemiah context, Farisani asserts that “it was Ezra who introduced ethnicity to the conflict by using the terms such as ‘holy race’ to refer to the returned exiles.”²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, he argues that a discussion of ethnicity could contribute to a theology of renewal, transformation, and reconstruction in the interest of the resolution of ethnic conflicts in Africa.²⁶⁵

The case of apartheid in South Africa is instructive. Indeed, the whole social system of apartheid was built on an ethnocentric ideology: a system of attitudes among white people in terms of which they considered themselves superior to the black people whom they considered inferior.²⁶⁶ But, fortunately the efforts of the South African churches in denouncing and dissociating themselves from the politic of apartheid have helped pave the way toward the democracy. The case of Rwanda where this problem of ethnicity had not been taken seriously led to a genocide involving the unwarranted loss of many human lives.

Similarly, in the New Testament we find the issue where the Gentile Christian converts were obliged by the Jewish Christians to be circumcised according to Moses’ law.²⁶⁷ So, the consideration of this problem by Paul and other apostles in the Jerusalem Council, for example, has helped to resolve the conflict.

²⁶² Clines, *Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther*, 73-74.

²⁶³ See H.J.C. Pieterse et al, “*Religious Beliefs and Ethnocentrism: A comparison between the Dutch and White South Africans.*” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 4, No. 2 (1991): 64-85.

²⁶⁴ Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 45.

²⁶⁵ Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 45.

²⁶⁶ Pieterse et al, “*Religious Beliefs*”, 71.

²⁶⁷ Galates 2: 1-12.

On the other hand, in the case of Ezra-Nehemiah the question of ethnicity was not taken into account by Nehemiah and other leaders. In addition, what is wrong in this ethnic conflict is the lack of dialogue between the two groups, which culminate not to the reconciliation but to the exclusion of am-haaretz. In this case, however, the situation becomes very difficult because of exclusive worship of Yahweh.

4.2.3.2 Debt and Slavery

The text of (Nehemiah 5: 1-13) relates a social and economic problem during the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem at the time when there was a real agricultural crisis. To face to this situation, people were obliged to mortgage their fields, homes, vineyards etc. in order to get grain during the famine (v.3). Moreover, people also had to borrow money in order to pay the king's tax. Others still, their sons and daughters were enslaved (v.5). This situation resulted in a definite socio-economic crisis. However, Nehemiah's extraordinary management of the crisis, plus his unselfishness, all contributed significantly to the resolution of the crisis. He succeeded to convince the nobles and officers to make the oath that they will give back everything, that is, the remission of all the debts (Neh. 5: 9-12). Nehemiah's unselfishness is then a major factor contributing to the resolution of crisis with socio-economic reform.

Farisani argues that with regard to Africa's socio-economic crisis, a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction which reads the Ezra-Nehemiah text from the am-haaretz's perspective can address the debt problem in Africa by alleviating the plight of the poor and marginalized, and strengthening the debate on debt remission or its cancellation.²⁶⁸

Slavery, on the other hand was also a real social problem for the population. As Burkett has observed, slaves composed about a third of the population. They came from conquered peoples, criminals, debtors sold to pay their debts, infants that were sold or abandoned. Around a thousand Jews were sold into slavery when the Romans took Jerusalem in 70 C.E.²⁶⁹ However, at the time of Nehemiah the socio-economic crisis was that the children have been enslaved. But, thanks to the unselfishness of Nehemiah, his generosity and restoration of justice, there was social economical reform.

²⁶⁸ Farisani, "The use of Ezra-Nehemiah", 46.

²⁶⁹ Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28.

4.2.3.3 Women oppression

It is worth noting that Farisani urges the use of the text for renewal and reconstruction. This involves not just accepting the ideology of the text, which is biased against and hostile towards women who oppose it, but also trying to find the sidelined voices of women in the Ezra-Nehemiah text. He argues that “the fact that we do not hear their cry does not mean that they did not cry nor does it mean that they approved of their exclusion, rather their silence is due to the fact that they have been silenced by the authors of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah.”²⁷⁰

Nonetheless, this problem of expulsion of foreign women from the community, which is related in (Ezra 9-10), has generally been open to various interpretations. The central question here is: why were these foreign women considered to be dangerous, and why did the ideology advanced for their expulsion become convincing to society in general? In Throuveit’s view, marriage reforms must be seen as a purification of the community along priestly lines of separation from all that was unclean.²⁷¹ According to Clines, marriage with certain foreigners was unlawful.²⁷² Janzen for his part sees the expulsion of foreign women as a ritualized act of purification or, more specifically, a witch-hunt, which is a kind of purification ritual.²⁷³ From the above, it is possible, I think, that the expulsion of foreign women is linked to the obedience and fidelity of people of Israel to the laws and recommendations of their God.

Now, viewed under reconstructive theology, Farisani argues that the ideology of this text could serve as a theological inspiration against women abuse, and the text of Ezra-Nehemiah could be used to undermine the stereotypes about women in Africa today.²⁷⁴

In conclusion, reading the Bible from a reconstructive religious perspective, according to Farisani, has three clear elements. The first one is a sociological analysis of the text, which aims to reveal the author’s ideology embedded within the text. The second element is a reading the text against the grain, which aims to find the voices of the marginalized and poor which are latent within the text.

²⁷⁰ Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 47.

²⁷¹ Throuveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah Interpretation*, 57.

²⁷² Clines, *Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther*, 133.

²⁷³ David Janzen, “*Witch-hunt, Purity and Social Boundaries: The Expulsion of the Foreign women in Ezra 9-10.*” JSOT Supp. 350. Edited by David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 3.

²⁷⁴ Farisani, “*The use of Ezra-Nehemiah*”, 47.

The third element is the application of the text within our contemporary context. Having briefly examined how Farisani reads the Ezra-Nehemiah text, I now move to the second part of this review, which focuses on how Farisani reads the text of (Romans 12:1-2).

4.3 Farisani's reading of Romans 12:1-2

Farisani's paper is composed of two sections: the first examines the concepts of renewal and transformation in Romans 12:1-2, while the second explores Jesse Mugambi's work on the Theology of Reconstruction as articulated in his book entitled *From Liberation to Reconstruction*. However, in this section, I will only deal with the first part, which he entitled "*Renewal and Transformation in Romans 12:1-2*". The reason for that is that, Mugambi's approach of reconstruction has already been examined in chapter two.

4.3.1 The text: Romans 12: 1-2

a) Literary context

Following Dunn, Farisani observes the structure of (Romans 12:1–15: 6) to be as follows:

12: 1-2	12: 3-8	12: 9-21	14: 1-15: 6
13: 1-7	13: 8-10	13: 11-14	

However, according to Leander, the structure of Romans 12: 1-16: 27 is as follows:

Romans 12:1-16:27 God's call to worship, holiness and unity

- A. 12:1-2, The worship of Body and Mind
- B. 12:3-13, Unity, Love and Community Living
- C. 12:14-13:7, The Church facing the outside world
 - 12:14-21, Christian living among (possibly hostile) outsiders
 - 13:1-7, God's call to obedience to the authorities
- D. 13:8-10, Love Fulfilling the law
- E. 13:11-14, Living by the Rising sun
- F. 14:1-15:13, God's call to unity of life and worship across barriers of Customs and Ethnic Identity
 - 14:1-12, Judging and being judged
 - 14:13-23, Conscience and the Kingdom of God
 - 15:1-13, Mutual welcome based on the Messiah

- G. 15:14-33, Paul's Apostolic travel plans
- H. 16:1-16, Commendations and greetings
- I. 16: 17—20, Watching out for divisions
- J. 16:21-24, Greetings from Paul's colleagues
- K. 16:25-27, Conclusion Doxology

It emerges from the literature that several structures can be proposed for this section of the Romans text. But, what is important here is the fact that all agree that Romans 12: 1-2 is the theme of the section and is about 'Living sacrifices'.²⁷⁵

Farisani shows how for Ziesler, "the concern in Romans 12 is more of a corporate than an individualist one."²⁷⁶ He believes that this concern is captured in the question: 'How should the community live?' As for Moo, he says that in (Romans 12:1-2), Paul gives a summary of how Christians should respond to God's grace in Christ.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, Keck argues that if verse 1 focuses on the body, then verse 2 focuses on the renewal of the mind. He continues by saying that "the most striking and pastorally relevant feature of these verses is that 'worship and obedience of this sort really does please God'."²⁷⁸

But, according to the text, the point here is the kind of sacrifice with which the Christians should respond to God's grace. This sacrifice cannot be like in the Old Testament where the children of Israel offered animals as sacrifices on the altar for forgiveness or to give thanks to God (Leviticus 1:1–7:38). Such sacrifices are no longer valid for Christians. On the contrary, Christians must give their own bodies as sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1). Farisani observes that 'body' refers to the entire person, which for Dunn involves, "daily commitment of life, lived within the constraints and relationships of this bodily world."²⁷⁹

4.3.2 Conformity and Transformation

Farisani notes that "Moo agrees with Evans that (Romans 12:1-2) is probably subordinate to v.1 giving the means by which we can carry out the exhortation of v.1.

²⁷⁵ See for example (Reta Halteman Finge, *Roman House Churches for Today: A practical Guide for Groups* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997); Leander E. Keck, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Romans* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 289.

²⁷⁶ Farisani, "Transformation and Renewal", 57.

²⁷⁷ Farisani, "Transformation and Renewal", 57.

²⁷⁸ Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 706.

We can present our bodies to the Lord as genuinely holy and acceptable sacrifices only if we ‘do not conform to this world’ but ‘are transformed by the renewal of the mind’.²⁸⁰ Hence, according to Farisani, three issues related to conformity and transformation can be noted in (Romans 12:1-2):

Firstly, he notes that “Paul urges his audience not to conform to this world as way of transforming it”. Secondly, there is the renewal of the mind, asserts Farisani, and the way in which the transformation is to take place is by the renewal of one’s mind (Rom.12:1-2). Thirdly, renewal of the mind leads to renewal of the world. For Morris, notes Farisani, “the renewal of mind.... Enables the believer to discern what is good, what is pleasing to God, and what is perfect. And having discerned it the same renewal sets him the task of performing what is seen as the will of God.”²⁸¹

To summarize this section, briefly, I can note that reading the Bible from a reconstructive religious perspective is a reading that engages a sociological and theological analysis of the text, examines the ideology within the text and from these analyses, it interprets the questions that emerge in the context of reconstruction.

After having shown how Farisani reads the text of Ezra-Nehemiah, and (Romans 12:1-2), I will move now in the third part of this chapter which is Reading (Romans 12:1-2) from a reconstructive religious perspective. As it has been indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the investigation of (Romans 12:1-2) will strive to understand reconstruction in the context of (Romans 12:1-2) with a view to be applied in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

4.4 Reading Romans 12:1-2 from a Reconstructive Religious Perspective

4.4.1 Justification of the choice of the text

The Epistle to the Romans occupies an important place within the Pauline Corpus, not only because it stands at the beginning, but also because many scholars regard this book as a key book in the search for Christian truth. Pak writes, “Martin Luther, Melancthon and John

²⁷⁹ Farisani, “*Transformation and Renewal*”, 58.

²⁸⁰ Farisani, “*Transformation and Renewal*”, 60.

²⁸¹ Farisani, “*Transformation and Renewal*”, 60-63.

Calvin unanimously estimated Paul's epistle to the Romans as providing the clearest teaching of the central message of the gospel, namely correct understanding of justification, grace, faith, sin, law and good works."²⁸² Similarly, Grenholm argued "Romans is saturated with theological material and therefore well suited for an investigation of the different interpretations of the Bible."²⁸³

This study is based on the assumption that a Christian religious discourse can play a significant role in the reconstruction of post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁸⁴ The appropriate choice of a biblical text is very important in this context because it serves as a necessary resource in which the interpretation of the text forms a structure of meaning for the envisaged Christian reconstructive discourse. The book of Romans is pertinent not only because it addresses significant themes for the Christian understanding of the Gospel of Christ²⁸⁵, but also because it contains the themes that have direct implications for a Christian religious discourse becoming a powerful weapon capable to bring change in the Democratic Republic of Congo. For this reason, my choice for the text of (Romans 12:1-2) is linked with the choice of the problem under investigation.

Indeed, in my view the text of (Romans 12:1-2) contains a powerful message capable of producing change in the life of a person. Along with Kä Mana, I consider that in the context of the process of reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is urgent to tackle first at the moral reconstruction. So, the text of (Romans 12:1-2) will help in the sense that the application of these values in the Christian discourse will have an impact on the life of the Congolese people in order to provoke the change that all desire.

In other words, I argue that (Romans 12:1-2) is appropriate because personal spiritual-moral reconstruction is the fundamental basis of all other reconstructions.

4.4.2 A Sociological Analysis of the Epistle to the Romans

The Epistle to the Romans is among the undisputed Pauline letters because the matter of its authorship is not in doubt. Nevertheless, it is evident that Paul wrote this to a community

²⁸² G. Sujin Pak, "Luther, Melancthon and Calvin on Romans 5 and 13: Three Reformation Approaches to Reading Romans." Pp. 122-143 in *Reformation Readings of Romans*. Edited by Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

²⁸³ Christina Grenholm, *Romans Interpreted: A Comparative Analysis of the Commentaries of Barth, Nygren, Cranfield, and Wilckens on Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1990), 11.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Hypothesis of the study

²⁸⁵ Grenhold, *Romans Interpreted*, 11.

which he did not found and had never visited.²⁸⁶ As Lampe reminds, the presence of Jews in Rome dated from 63 B.C.E. when Pompey who conquered Judea deported large numbers of Jews to Rome as slaves. Later under Augustus they were freed and most of them gained Roman citizenship.²⁸⁷ Jewett reports that Pompey brought large numbers of Jewish slaves in 63 B.C.E. Most of them became Roman citizens and the community as a whole numbered between 15,000 and 60,000 in the late 50s when Paul wrote. He adds that they were concentrated especially in the Trastevere district of the city according to Philo.²⁸⁸

But unlike other communities in Rome that lacked any form of organization, the Jewish community were well organized as the following quotation confirms: “The Jews were normally organized as a distinctive community, governed by its own laws and institutions, and often contended, sometimes successfully, for equality with the full citizens.”²⁸⁹ Meeks also reports that Jews benefited further advantages:

the City Council and demos of Sardis issued a decree confirming the right of the Jewish citizens living in the city to come together and have communal life [*politesthai*] and adjudicate suits among themselves, and that a place be given to them in which they may gather together with their wives and children and offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices to God.²⁹⁰

The first Christians of Rome were former Jews or *sebomenoi* (devout people, God-fearers) who were attached to synagogue. It was in the synagogue of Jews that the message of Jesus was preached. The preaching produced a tumult among the Jews in Rome and the Christians therefore were met with suspicion, they were regarded to have become potentially dangerous for the Roman order.²⁹¹ It is for this reason that in 49 C.E. the Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome because they were constantly causing disturbances and instigations around Christ.²⁹²

²⁸⁶ John Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's good News for the World* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 31.

²⁸⁷ Peter Lampe, “Early Christians in the City of Rome. Topographical and Social Historical Aspects of the First Three Centuries” Pp.20-32 in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in the Early Imperial*. Edited by Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn (London/New York: Clark, 2004), 2.

²⁸⁸ Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007, 55.

²⁸⁹ Mayne Meeks A., *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 13.

²⁹⁰ Meeks, *The first urban Christians*, 34.

²⁹¹ Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 28.

²⁹² Burtchett, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 559 (see also Margaret H. Williams “The Shaping of the Identity of the Jewish Community in Rome in Antiquity.” Pp.33-46 in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural city: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in the Early Imperial*. Edited by Jürgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn (London/New York: Clark, 2004).

According to Lampe, the displacement of “Chrestus” for “Christus” by Suetonius produces no difficulty: “Chrestians” was a popular designation for the Christians. He adds that in connection with Nero’s persecution of the urban Roman Christians, “Chrestians” appears as the appellation used by Roman people. Accordingly, “Chrestianus” was a widespread designation for Christians among the pagans.²⁹³ But after the death of Claudius in 54, many of Jewish Christians presumably returned to Rome and reintegrated among the Gentile Christians in the Community.²⁹⁴ However, the Church of Rome, as Matera has observed, represents a type of Christianity that Wedderburn calls ‘Judaizing’, which is a form of Christianity that treats ‘Christianity’ as part of Judaism and that requires all its adherents to observe the Jewish law.²⁹⁵

From this view, some scholars had suggested that “Paul wrote the letter to the Romans first, to introduce himself and his Gospel, and second to resolve a conflict between the “strong” and the “weak” in the Roman Church,²⁹⁶ though this question of the motivation for the Epistle is very widely debated. In this view, the ‘weak’ in faith according to Paul are identified with the Jewish Christians and hold some beliefs that the ‘strong’ do not share. For example, they should not eat food considered as unclean (Rom. 14:2), while the ‘strong’ are identified with Gentile Christians who have no problem eating foods sacrificed to idols.

To sum up, the apostle who identified himself with the ‘strong’ wrote the letter to resolve this conflict between the ‘weak’ and the ‘strong’ by recommending the ‘strong’ not to despise the ‘weak’ and at the same time the ‘weak’ not to condemn the ‘strong’ (Rom. 14:5).

Therefore, the question of ethnicity emerges in the Epistle to the Romans.²⁹⁷ I will look next at ideology in the Epistle to the Romans.

²⁹³ Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 12-13.

²⁹⁴ Barkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 315.

²⁹⁵ Frank Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 181.

²⁹⁶ See for example Caroline Johnson Hodge, “*Olive Trees and Ethnicities Judeans and Gentiles in Romans 11: 17-24*” Pp.77-87, in *Christians as a Religious Minority in a Multicultural City: Modes of Interaction and Identity Formation in the Early Imperial*. Edited by Jurgen Zangenberg and Michael Labahn (London/New York: Clark, 2004), 86.

²⁹⁷ Hodge, “*The Olive Trees*”, 86.

4.4.3 Ideology in Romans

As it has been previously noted, the term ‘ideology’ contains several denotations. So, a recall to what I understand by it here is important. Simply ideology may be defined as a set of ideas serving the interests of a particular group, especially a dominant group. In the modern sense ‘ideology’ is defined as a set of ideas that legitimate the dominant political power.²⁹⁸ In biblical perspective, Clines argues that “the term ‘ideology’ is not most frequently a term used for a set of ideas in biblical writings. Scholars use ‘ideology’ in the pejorative sense of false consciousness.”²⁹⁹ But in a critical sense, the term ideology is not applied to any system of thought, or beliefs, rather it refers to the way in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination.³⁰⁰

From this view, Horrell who has researched the origins of theological ideology in Pauline Christianity has observed that Paul is “involved either deliberately or unintentionally in the ideology of maintenance of power.”³⁰¹ That means that in certain of his writings, Paul sustains and legitimates the established forms of social domination. Such a case might be found in (Rom.13:1-6) where the Apostle gives instructions to the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome to submit to the authorities. The text however, is open to several ideological interpretations. According to Finger, Paul recommends general submission to government because of his missionary plan to take the gospel to Spain, for that he needs a unified Church in Rome as well as a peaceful empire throughout which he can travel and work.³⁰² In Brown’s view, the instructions to pay taxes and to respect and honor those in authority would make model citizens of the Christians.³⁰³

Whatever the assumptions, one can discern an ideological element within this passage in that Paul requires from Jewish and Gentile Christians the subjection or submission to the authority because they are God’s servant, and does not give them any possibilities either to resist or to protest against the inequalities of life. That is what Malina and Pilch have also observed. Interpreting the same passage both are of the view that Paul supports and

²⁹⁸ Clines, *Interested Parties*, 24.

²⁹⁹ Clines, *Interested Parties*, 13.

³⁰⁰ David, Horrell, “*Development of Theological Ideology in Pauline Christianity: A Structuration Theory Perspective*” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*. Edited by Philip Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 224-236.

³⁰¹ Horrell, “*Development of Theological Ideology*”, 226.

³⁰² Finger, *Roman House Churches*, 128.

³⁰³ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 572.

legitimizes the power. They argue that “what Paul advises here is irrelevant; he envisions a system of an aristocratic empire in the control of the elite.”³⁰⁴

Hence, I can conclude that the author of Romans is portrayed with an ideology which supports the hierarchy, that is, the maintenance of power. In this way, the impact of this ideology is to legitimate and support the maintenance of power by giving it divine sanction.³⁰⁵ Now, I will move to the next point that is reading Romans’ text against the grain.

4.4.4 Reading Romans’ text against the grain

In reading the text against the grain the interpreter examines the issues raised from a sociological analysis of the text, namely, issues related to class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and social location. In the case of Romans, I will focus on the issue of ethnicity which the sociological analysis has raised, and to see how this problem was treated within the Christian community of Rome. It is important to remember that Paul wrote this letter to the members of the Church of which he was not the founder.³⁰⁶

It is through Jewish Christians that the Roman Church began, and the Gentiles converts soon joined them.³⁰⁷ But the Gentile Christians would have remained in charge of the Church when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 C.E.³⁰⁸ The two groups lived together in the same community and the tension between two groups was strong. What provoked this tension was the reality that the Jewish Christians in Rome regarded Christianity as simply part of Judaism and required all Christians to observe the Jewish law.³⁰⁹

As Malina and Pilch argue, the Jewish Christians are ‘weak’ because they are unable to understand and follow the abrogation of the Mosaic Law inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Gentile Christians on the other hand are ‘strong’ because they are able to accept the abrogation of the Mosaic Law as warranted by the death and resurrection of

³⁰⁴ Bruce Malina J and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 280.

³⁰⁵ Horrell, “*The Development of theological ideology*”, 23.

³⁰⁶ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 317.

³⁰⁷ Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 316.

³⁰⁸ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 35.

³⁰⁹ Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 316.

Jesus.³¹⁰ Seen from a reconstructive theological perspective, it is easy to detect the clues of ethnicity within the text of Romans 14-15.³¹¹

In the case of Rom.14-15, the implications of ethnicity could have negative effects. Thankfully, Paul is seen as a peacemaker and reconciliator. Identifying himself with the ‘strong’, he recommends the ‘strong’ not to despise the ‘weak’, and the ‘weak’ no to condemn the ‘strong’ . To two groups, the apostle recommends not to judge a fellow believer (Rom.14:1-12), or to cause a fellow believer to stumble (Rom.14:13-15:16), but rather to accept one another (Rom.15:7-13).

To sum up, today many countries are torn by ethnic conflicts. In my view, reconciliation could be very important in the resolution of these conflicts, and the example of Paul as peacemaker and reconciliator is a good one to follow for a durable peace. In the following, I will undertake a theological analysis of Romans 12:1-2.

4.4.5 Semantic analysis of Romans 12:1-2

In this section, we need to consider the meaning of some key expressions and words in the text. The word *latreian* from the verb *latreuo* expresses the manner in which the service of God is performed.³¹² *Latreuo* occurs 21 times in the New Testament and in this form – *latreia*– appears 5 times: twice in (Rom 9:4 and Rom 12:1); once in (John 16:2) and twice in (Heb 9:1 and 10:2). In all these cases it encompasses the idea of sacrificial worship. In Greek Literature and in the LXX, the verb *latreuo* appears almost exclusively in the religious and cultic sense of Israel’s worship.

In the New Testament, the word *latreia* refers to sacrificial worship. But in Hebrews, the idea of the priestly sacrificial worship is replaced by the true worship which is based on Christ’s once-for-all self sacrifice.

³¹⁰ Malina and Pilch, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 282.

³¹¹ Caroline Johnson Hodge is, one who has addressed the question of Ethnicity and attempted to use Romans as a tool for reconstruction of the Rome’s Church.

³¹² Frederick W. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3th Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 65.

For Paul, the *logiken latreia* consists of offering of the whole life of the believer as a sacrifice to God.³¹³ The word *logiken* is translated by rational or spiritual.³¹⁴ The adjective *logikos* appears only twice in the New Testament in (Rom 12:1 and 1 Pet 2:2). In (Rom 12:1), the interpreters have translated *logike* in different ways: “spiritual”, “rational”, “appropriate”, or “reasonable”.³¹⁵ In Hellenistic mysticism *logike* is translated as worship in conformity with the world.³¹⁶

But, here in (Rom 12:1), Paul makes the use of the word to mean not only the sense of worship which consists in singing of hymns, as the sacred service of human being as a *logikos* (one endowed with reason)³¹⁷ but refers rather to the daily life determined by faith as true worship³¹⁸, a spiritual sacrifice and not the offering of an irrational animal³¹⁹. Here, it is necessary to consider the word *logike* in combination with *latreia* which is translated by “spiritual worship”, and Paul says that each believer must present his body as *logike latreia*.

As for *aioni touto*, he means “this world”, “this age”. *Aion* encompasses the idea of an era, time or age.³²⁰ But Greek in general distinguishes *kronos* and *aion*. Plato for example, distinguishes between *aion* as timeless, ideal eternity in which there are no days or months or years, and *kronos* as the time which is created with world as moving image of eternity,³²¹ and as divided into a succession of ages.³²²

Paul then reflects the expression from Jewish apocalyptic thought where “the present age” was contrasted with “the age to come”. The conviction of the apocalyptic thought is that the new age to come will be decidedly different quantitatively better than the present age.³²³

³¹³ Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 344-345.

³¹⁴ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 355.

³¹⁵ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 355.

³¹⁶ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 355.

³¹⁷ Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 598.

³¹⁸ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 355.

³¹⁹ William D. Sunday, and Arthur C. Headlam (eds.), *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 353.

³²⁰ Timothy Fribery et al(eds.), *Analythical Lexicon of Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids/Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 39.

³²¹ Gerhard, Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids/London: Eerdmans, 1964), 198.

³²² Sunday and Headlam, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 353.

³²³ Gerald F. Hawthorne and Raph P. Martin (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 189.

Indeed, Paul uses the expression here in (Rom 12:2), but it is also found in (1Cor 1:20; 2: 6,8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4 and Gal 1:4), with the idea of the present “evil age”. Further in the New Testament, *aion* is also mentioned in (Matt 13:22 and Mark 4:19) expressing closely the idea of *kosmos*.³²⁴

In fact, Paul does not speak of an “age to come”, instead he speaks rather of “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), in the sense of newness of life. According to Hawthorne and Martin, the characteristics of the new creation are, therefore, reconciliation and rejection of worldly standards.³²⁵ For those scholars, reconciliation occurs when believers cease living according to worldly standards and when they “put away” conduct that characterizes the old humanity (Col 3:5-9, Eph 4:25-30) and “put on” the new humanity which is renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.³²⁶

Therefore, the point here is that for Paul nonconformity to the world entails a transformation that has, for purposes of “a new creation,” the new ethos, which now conforms to God’s will. This new creation proceeds through the individual, through the community and through the *kosmos*. But, it is only those who are temporally in “this age” and who let themselves be transformed according to God’s will, that are a “new creation” in Christ, because their conduct is away from the worldly standards.³²⁷

Metamorphousthe is a verb in the indicative aorist passive 2nd person plural. The verb *metamorphoo* occurs 4 times in the New Testament (in Matt 17:2, Mark 9:2, Rom 12:2 and 2 Cor 3:18). The basic meaning of *metamorphoo* is the change of *morphe*.³²⁸ And *morphe* is a form, an external appearance as can be discerned by or through the natural senses.³²⁹

In (Matt 17: 2 and Mark 9: 2), *metamorphousthe* has the sense of change in a manner visible to others or being transformed. In this narrative, the three disciples have seen a change in the nature of Jesus. In (2 Cor 3:18) on the other hand, *metamorphoumetha* has the sense of a change inward in fundamental character or condition.³³⁰

³²⁴ Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 203.

³²⁵ Hawthorne and Martin, *Dictionary of Paul*, 192.

³²⁶ Hawthorne and Martin, *Dictionary of Paul*, 192.

³²⁷ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 323.

³²⁸ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 415.

³²⁹ Fribery et al, *Analytical Lexicon*, 266.

³³⁰ Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon New Testament*, 639.

In almost similar manner, Paul in (Rom 12: 2) uses *metamorphousthe* in the sense of a change through the renewing of mind. The goal of this change is that the Christian could test and prove the will of God.

Therefore, *metamorphoo* is used in the New Testament for 2 reasons:

1. For a revelation of the glory of the earthly Jesus produced by God; and
2. For the continuing transformation produced in the Christian through the knowledge made possible by the faith.³³¹

4.4.6 Theological Interpretation of Romans 12:1-2

As we noted before, our passage is part of Paul's Epistle that is called *parenesis*. Paul's better known *parenesis* sections are (Rom 12:1-15:13; Gal 5:13-6:10) and (1 Thess 4:1-5:22).³³²

It is necessary to consider that the transition from (Rom 11 to Rom 12) is very significant in the thought of Paul as Moo observes in the following: "the transition from (Rom 11 to Rom 12) is not therefore a transition from "theology" to "practice" but from a focus more on the "indicative" side of the gospel to a focus more on the "imperative" side of the gospel."³³³ Thus here Paul makes a bridge between chapter 12 and the preceding chapters, that is, he passes from the instruction to commandment.

In v.1, Paul urges the Romans "to present their bodies as living sacrifices" (NRSV). The word "present" occurs for the first time in this Epistle at 6:13 and it is practically the same idea that is unfolding here.³³⁴ But we need to understand the word "sacrifice" in the Jewish context as Trebilco correctly put it:

Worship in the sacrificial cult was the God-ordained way of expressing thanksgiving and praise, and of obtaining forgiveness and atonement. Therefore it was a principal aspect of the true worship of God. Sacrifice was crucial, since it was part of the means by which Jews maintained their status as the covenant people.³³⁵

But in (Rom 12:1) Paul says that the sacrifice that Christians should offer to God is "their bodies", rather than the body of animals that the Jews offered to God and placed upon the

³³¹ Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 415.

³³² Porter, *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, 545.

³³³ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 745.

³³⁴ James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 204.

³³⁵ Paul R. Trebilco, "Jewish Background" Pp.359-389 in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*. Edited by Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 367.

sacred altar.³³⁶ As Moo argues Paul chooses the term “*logike latreia*” to create a contrast between the Jewish and Christian forms of worship.³³⁷ It must be noted that the Lexical form of the adjective *latreia* does not occur in the LXX, and the Hellenistic Jews took over the use of the term and applied it sometimes to the mental and spiritual attitude necessary for a sacrifice to have merit before God.³³⁸

Therefore, some scholars have translated the word “*logike*” by “spiritual” or “reasonable” in the sense of worship that is appropriate to their new spiritual life. In this view Moo for his part has suggested four meanings of “*logike*”, namely: “spiritual” in the sense of “inner”: a worship that involves the mind and the heart as opposed to a worship that simply goes through the motions; “spiritual” or “rational” in the sense of “appropriate for human beings as rational and spiritual creatures of God”: a worship that honors God by giving him what he truly wants as opposed to the depraved worship offered by human beings under the power of sin; “rational” in the sense of “acceptable to human reason: a worship that “makes sense” as opposed to the “irrational” worship of God through the offering of animals; and “reasonable” or “logical” in the sense of “fitting the circumstances”: a worship that is appropriate to those who have truly understood the truth revealed in Christ.³³⁹

So, from the above description the idea that encompasses this expression is that the Christian must present his/her body as an acceptable sacrifice to God with the idea of consecration of all his/her life, in contrast to the Jews’ sacrifice. But with the only condition that s/he does not conform to this world.

In v.2 Paul recommends the Romans to “not conform to this world (*aion*) which is in contrast with the coming one, but to be transformed by renewing of the mind, in order to test and prove the will of God”. Here it is necessary that we pay attention to two words namely: “conform” and “transformed”. Stifler who has analyzed the passage argues that the two words are different. The former looks to the outward and the latter to the inward.³⁴⁰ However, Paul uses the two words because he is looking for a transformation at the deepest level.

³³⁶ Thomas P. Scheck P., *Origen Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 6-10* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2005), 192.

³³⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 751.

³³⁸ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 751

³³⁹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 751-752.

³⁴⁰ Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 205.

We cannot be transformed by outward means, but rather by inward means that is the renewing of the mind³⁴¹ through the Gospel that is the transforming power. Because, it is only a renewed mind that is capable of understanding God's will. Therefore, it is worth noting that "transformation" is the work of God in renewing the mind, it is not achieved by a person's power.

To sum up, it is important to note that in Paul's day, Hellenistic mystics made "spiritual" sacrifices.³⁴² In the Greco-Roman world there was equally the worship of the Emperor.³⁴³ In the Jewish's context, the sacrifice was a means for the maintenance of their status as an elect people. But in Rom 12:1-2, Paul wants to extend this dimension of sacrifice to the sacrifice that bears life. That is an acceptable worship to God. The will of God on the other hand, is indeed always good. But we are not always directed by God's will because we are conforming to this world with its spirit that is selfishness and not love, its pursuits are the pleasing of self and not of God, and its domination from the evil one and not from Christ.³⁴⁴

Therefore, the appeal of Paul to not to conform to this world and to be directed by God's will is significant as Stott reminds us because, the will of God embraces our relationship not only to God (Rom 12:1-2), but to ourselves (Rom 12:3-8), to each other (Rom 12:9-16), to the enemies (Rom 12:17-21), to the state (Rom 13:1-7), to the law (Rom 13:8-10), to the day of Christ's return (Rom 13:11-14), and to the "weak" members of the Christ community (Rom 14:1-15:13).³⁴⁵

Finally, not to conform to this world is the way to understand, and to be directed by the will of God and to become the men and women transformed for the transformation of our society.

4.4.7 Religious Context of Romans 12: 1-2.

*Fallenness

In the context of Christian theology, the word 'fall' calls to remind the transgression or the disobedience of Adam and Eve in Eden as reported in Genesis 3. Mills asserts that "the use of the same type of story is found as the background of Ezek 28 concerning the fall of the

³⁴¹ Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 205.

³⁴² A. M. Hunter, *The Epistle to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SMC Press, 1961), 108.

³⁴³ Trebilco, "Jewish Background", 367.

³⁴⁴ Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 205.

³⁴⁵ Stott, *The Message*, 324.

mighty king of Tyre.”³⁴⁶ In the Eden while the pair had the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience, they chose disobedience. Consequently, human disobedience brought the penalty of death as punishment. From there, human life is represented as distorted deprived and broken. The image of God after which the first human pair was modeled has been lost or defaced, and with it the primordial unity of human life has been fractured.³⁴⁷ As Buttrick argues, “in Genesis 2-3 Adam appears as generic man. He represents human nature as created in the divine image. He also represents mankind as owing unquestioning allegiance to God.”³⁴⁸

Whereas the story of the fall seems to have little effect upon the Old Testament thought, it dominates the New Testament doctrine of the origin of sin (Rom 5:12-19). Paul speaks about the ‘universal nature’ of sin in Rom 5:12. In this passage, he contrasts Adam and Christ. Paul explains both Adam’s sin and Christ’s suffering and death, humankind is universally affected. As Mills argues, “just as in one man’s sin the relationship between human beings and God suffered, and death came as punishment for the human tendency to sin, so in one man, Christ, the relationship between humankind and God is set right.”³⁴⁹ Whereas Adam’s disobedience brought condemnation and death, Christ’s obedience has brought justification and life.³⁵⁰ With Christ’s death, we have justification, reconciliation and salvation.

In chapter 6:1-11, Paul explains that our old man was crucified with Christ; we were baptized into his death and buried with him. So, as he was raised from death, we also might walk in newness life. According to Paul, sin remains an active force though we are under grace. For this reason he warns of the danger of being enslaved by sin (Rom 6:12-23). As Buttrick argues sin is only possible because the human being has been created in God’s image and has freedom of self-assertion. Sin comes when human being uses this freedom to measure himself against God, trying to be independent of his/her control.³⁵¹ Hence, the human being who is free is the human being who is free from sin (Rom 6:18-23; John 8:31-36).

³⁴⁶ Watson E. Mills et al, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Marcon/Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1990), 293.

³⁴⁷ Meeks, *The First urban Christians*, 188.

³⁴⁸ George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia in Four Volumes* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 238.

³⁴⁹ Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 294.

³⁵⁰ Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 38.

³⁵¹ Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary*, 237.

*Restoration

The term restoration originally refers to the eschatological idea of the final restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). The concept then was used in Greek philosophy by the Stoics who taught a period of confrontation followed by a “restoration” or “regeneration in which the same events recur in each cycle.”³⁵² Consequently, the term “restoration” was used in ancient literature in different ways. For example the return of the stars to their original constellations after their great cycle was referred to as restoration.³⁵³ Yet it continues to supply eschatology with archetypal material drawn both from the concept of creation and from the decisive occurrences of Hebrew and Christian history.³⁵⁴ From this perspective, the term ‘restoration’ increasingly became a technical term in the Old Testament for the political restoration of Israel by God (e.g. Jeremiah 15: 19).

In Acts 1:6, Luke corrects this Jewish conception of ‘restoration’. This view reverses the limitation of the Kingdom of God to Israel, by urging the restoration of all things.³⁵⁵ However, in the New Testament the real starting point for the New Testament conception of “restoration” is the realization of newness in Christ’s victory on the cross (John 1:29; Rom 5:18; 1 Cor 15:22). For that, Paul urges us now to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4), and the newness of the Spirit in Christ transforms us into a new creation.

*Cosmology

From a broad sense, cosmology is understood as all that concerns the origin, order, destiny of all that exist. However, according to biblical scholars the origins and structures of the cosmos are less frequently found in the New Testament than in the Hebrew Bible. Freedman explains that this lack is due to the smaller size of the collection of texts from early Christianity and, essentially, the picture painted in the Hebrew Bible is assumed in the New Testament.³⁵⁶

Surprisingly however, Hebrew has no single word equivalent to cosmos, universe or reality. Instead “various phrases are employed to express all-exclusiveness”.³⁵⁷ Hence the expressions such as “the heavens and earth” (Gn 1:1; 2:4), “the heavens, earth, and sea” (Exod 20:11; Ps 69:34) are used.

³⁵² Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary*, 38.

³⁵³ James D. Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1963), 843.

³⁵⁴ Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary*, 38.

³⁵⁵ Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary*, 39.

³⁵⁶ David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Vol. 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1168.

However, the ancient Israelites' view of the physical world can be reconstructed from the Old Testament texts. The universe for them is an entity consisting of three levels: the firmament, the sheol and the waters above and the waters below.³⁵⁸ According to the Israelite conception, a series of human images also occurs cosmologically.³⁵⁹ But as we have already noted, in the New Testament the first source of the New Testament cosmological thought is the material from the Hebrew Bible.³⁶⁰

However, it is in Paul's letters that we find the cosmological foundations of early Christianity, and the confessions of Christ's cosmic rule are at the heart of the New Testament cosmology. Hence, New Testament cosmology drawing on ancient Greek thought and also Jewish apocalyptic thought, views the world (cosmos) to be divided within itself between the forces of God and the forces of evil. In other words, the world is considered both as alienated from God, yet also as the object of God's salvific plan, i.e. both the "*kosmos*" (the totality of all that exists) and "*aion*" (this world in contrast to the world to come).³⁶¹

*Renewal

Kung argues that to aim at what is new and better about the continuity of historical development is not innovation but renewal.³⁶² In this sense, the Protestant Reform in the 16th Century was seen as a renewal of the medieval Catholic Church. But, Kung also observes that the word "renewal" is often better than the word "reform". That is because to him, renewal emphasizes on its positive and creative aspects.³⁶³ In psychological conception of the concept, "renewal" is a change in experience and behavior that occurs through movement of the boundary between consciousness and unconsciousness.

According to this view, a constructive change occurs by overcoming the dysfunction between consciousness and unconsciousness.³⁶⁴

Now returning to the theological perspective, "renewal" had already its foundation in Christ as Paul puts it: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17).

³⁵⁷ Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 175.

³⁵⁸ Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 175.

³⁵⁹ Ezekiel 38: 12.

³⁶⁰ Freedman, *The Anchor Bible*, 1168.

³⁶¹ Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 176.

³⁶² Hans Kung, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 340.

³⁶³ Kung, *The Church*, 340.

Jewett argues that the term “renewal” appears for the first time in Greek literature given the prominence of the term “newness” in Rom 6: 4 and 7: 6 as denoting the restoration of humans through the power of Christ.³⁶⁵

Therefore, the “renewal” requires first the awareness of God’s holiness, and secondly awareness of the depth of sin.³⁶⁶ It is why Paul urges that Christians must ‘put off’ their old self (Eph 4:22), and not be conformed to this world, but instead to be transformed by the renewal of the mind in order to be able to test and approve what God’s will is (Rom 12:2). Then, renewal in this context implies new creation.

In this sense it is only a mind renewed that can discern God’s will. Consequently, the God’s will enables us to:

- renew our relationship with God (Rom 12:1-2)
- renew our relationship with ourselves (Rom 12:3-8)
- renew our relationship with the world (Rom 13)
- renew our relationship with the community (Rom 13-14)

To sum up, nevertheless “to be renewed” as Keck says is God’s work who in renewing the mind, creates a new mentality able to discern his will.³⁶⁷

4.5 Reconstruction in the context of Romans 12

Before concluding this chapter, we need to understand reconstruction in the context of (Romans 12:1-2). Indeed, after having examined how Farisani reads the text of Ezra-Nehemiah and Romans, and after having done our reading of Romans 12:1-2 from a reconstructive religious perspective, it is possible now to bring out what we mean by reconstruction in the context of Rom 12:1-2. In so doing, we must first remember that the aim pursued by Paul in his exhortation is the renewal/transformation of life. So in order to attain this objective there is non-conformity with the world. From this perspective, we can schematize the reconstruction in Romans 12:1-2 as follows:

³⁶⁴ Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 11.

³⁶⁵ Jewett, *Romans*, 733.

³⁶⁶ Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal as a way of Life: A guidebook for Spiritual Growth* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), 136.

³⁶⁷ Keck, *Abingdon New Testament: Romans*, 294.

Fallennesses.....	Restoration.....	Relationship
Awareness	Renewal/	Community
of Sin	Transformation	

R E C O N S T R U C T I O N

In sum, reconstruction in the context of Romans 12:1-2 is to have the awareness of the sin, and then comes the renewal in a new life in order to live in good relationships with the other members of the community. Now, I turn to the last part of this chapter which is Ethical Exhortation and Moral Formation in the Early Christianity.

4.6 Ethical exhortation and Moral Formation in Early Christianity

The term ‘early Christianity’ refers to members of the earliest communities of believers in Jesus Christ from Pentecost through the preaching of Peter, and later those who have believed through the preaching of Apostles (Acts 2:40). The text of Acts 2:42-47 shows us the lifestyle and the ethos that characterized the earliest Christian communities.

However, the ethos of the contemporary Christianity differs far from the ethos of the early Christianity. As Brown has remarked, there was a rapid dissociation of contemporary society from the ethos of the Churches in the past generation. In his study of British people he argues that “the British people since 1960s have stopped going to Church, have allowed their Church membership to lapse, have stopped marrying in Church and have neglected to baptize their children.”³⁶⁸ Briefly, Brown observed a loss of moral identity in British contemporary Christianity. Today, with the television, internet and other media, it is not easy for the Christian parents to develop a distinctive Christian identity for their children.

4.6.1 The Ethical Exhortation in Early Christianity

The use of the two adjectives ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ is somewhat controversial. While some scholars distinguish ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ others maintain that the two words can be used

³⁶⁸ Callum Brown, *The death of Christian British : Understanding Secularization, 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

interchangeably.³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, whatever the use, I think that ‘ethics’ is the practice of morality. As McDonald argues, the ‘ethics’ is reserved for a secondary reflection on morality.³⁷⁰ But, in its practice the question which has been at the center of debate is if the Christian approach to ethics differs from the secular philosophical approach.

Fergusson is of the view that the ethical teaching of the New Testament displays significant similarities to pagan teaching about morality.³⁷¹ Similarly, it is also the point of Augustine’s argument that “the ethics prescribed by pagan philosophers coincides with those required for the practice of Christianity.”³⁷² In addition certain scholars have argued that Paul’s moral teaching has a Stoic framework.³⁷³

Therefore, the above evidence suggests that it is likely that there are similarities between the Christian approach to ethics and the secular philosophical approach, especially when we know that Paul had been formed under Greek philosophical influence. It is then possible that his thought depends on Greek philosophy as Thorsteinsson asserts in the following: “when Paul argues with his readers to be transformed or metamorphosed by renewal of mind, these words come strikingly close to Stoic ‘transformation of mind’.”³⁷⁴ However, on the other hand it is possible to assert that the Christian approach to ethics differs from the secular philosophical approach on a very important point. As Fedler point out, “whereas philosophers ground their efforts in the experience of the world and human reason, Christians ground that there are two more sources of wisdom and guidance... (1) the traditions of the Christian Church, and importantly, (2) the Bible.”³⁷⁵

So, although some scholars agree that there is no difference, in my view I think that Christian ethics differs from philosophical ethics.

³⁶⁹ John, Wittaker, “Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire” Pp19-35 in *Christian Life: Ethics, Morality and Discipline in the Early Christianity* Vol. 16. Edited by Everett Fergusson (New York: Garland, 1993).

³⁷⁰ J. Ian H. McDonald, *The Crucible of Christian Morality* (London: Routledge, 1995), 5.

³⁷¹ David, Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

³⁷² See John Wittaker, “Christian and Morality in the Roman Empire” Pp.19-35, in *Christian Life: Ethics, Morality and Discipline in the Early Christianity* Vol. 16. Edited by Everett Fergusson (New York: Garland, 1993).

³⁷³ Rumar, M. Thorsteinsson, “Paul and Roman Stoicism: Rom 12 and Contemporary Stoic Ethics.” *JSNT* 29, No.2, (2006): 139-161.

³⁷⁴ Thorsteinsson, “Paul and Roman Stoicism”, 147.

³⁷⁵ Kyle D. Fedler, *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundation for Morality* (Louisville: Westminster, 2006), 51.

The difference lies in the fact that Christian ethics is based on God's knowledge and not human, and Scripture is the primary source for Christian ethics. It is through Scripture that we come to know who God is and what his will is for us.

While for the stoics, the principles of physics are the foundations of ethics, and the principles of physics and ethics are interdependent.³⁷⁶ Thus, to live in accordance with reason is the foundation of moral behavior for the Stoics and reason is therefore the source of knowledge.

However, it is obvious that the ethical thinking of Paul has been influenced so much by the power and the righteousness of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. The power of the resurrected Christ is interpreted most fully in the thinking of Paul.³⁷⁷ Indeed, Paul appeals to several images of Jesus such as baptism, resurrection, Lord's Supper in order to explore his ethical thinking. Undoubtedly, Paul presents a very elaborate ethics; his ethical is *paraenesis* or moral exhortation and it is addressing the communities, because it is within the communities where these exhortations are addressed and are valuable. Almost all his letters are full of ethical exhortations in which he brings the indicative ways of thinking about ethical exhortation. His letters reflect the ethos of thanksgiving, praise and prayer.³⁷⁸ Paul's ethics is the ethics of communities, an ethic that seeks the good of the communities.

In sum, it is then the teaching of Jesus and the exhortation of Paul that furnish the basis for the formation of new communities composed of persons committed to a new set of beliefs and style of life that harmonizes with them.³⁷⁹ In the following, I will examine moral formation in Early Christianity.

4.6.2 Moral Formation in Early Christianity

Bockle and Pohier have asserted that 'moral education' means making individuals and a social group capable of eliciting certain values and advancing the causes of good.³⁸⁰

That means that in the process of formation the notion of group or community and issues of values are indispensable for the formation.

³⁷⁶ Denis J.M. Bradley, "Transformation of the Stoic Ethics in Clement of Alexandria." Pp. 43-66 in *Christian Life: Ethics, Morality and Discipline in the Early Christianity* Vol. 16. Edited by Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1993)

³⁷⁷ LeRoy Long, *To Liberate and Redeem: Moral Reflections on the Biblical Narrative* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 183.

³⁷⁸ Long, *To Liberate*, 188.

³⁷⁹ Long, *To Liberate*, 194.

³⁸⁰ Franz Bockle and Pohier Jacques-Marie (eds.), *Moral Formation and Christianity* (New York: Seabury, 1978), viii.

From this perspective, Ryan quoted by Bockle and Pohier asserts that the “values classification” in the moral formation of Americans during the time of revelation of crimes, aimed to help the child to clarify what he believed and bring to the surface his own understanding. By doing so the moral formation then is achieved by helping the child to find out his own values.³⁸¹ In the similar vein, Aristotle also believed that a man became brave by doing brave acts, and a man became kind by engaging in acts of kindness. In fact one becomes moral by behaving in moral ways.³⁸²

I think that to understand the moral formation in Early Christianity, we need to know something about moral formation in the Old Testament. Indeed, in the Old Testament context, the relationship between God and the people of Israel stands on Israel’s moral formation.³⁸³ The liturgical celebration and Psalms emphasize on many elements of moral formation.³⁸⁴ The message of the prophets was a very important source of the moral formation of Israel. The call of the prophets for the moral renewal was a pre-condition for the survival of Israel as a nation.

Now in the New Testament, McDonald observed what he characterized as “the crucible of Christian morality”. The term ‘crucible’ according to him meant that early Christian communities were the settings composed of different traditions from a variety of sources.³⁸⁵ He asserted that the ethos of these communities was defined by their leading model, that is, Christ and those who reflected the pattern of his ministry.³⁸⁶ From this perspective, the moral formation in the Early Christianity had the following sources:

1. The Scripture: scriptural interpretation was the main source for the moral formation. The Decalogue continued to provide a framework for moral teaching for the Christian as it did for Jews. The *shema* (Deut 6:4-9), and the theme of the first commandment pointed to the way in which the moral life of the communities takes form.³⁸⁷ In a few words, the Hebrew Scripture offered moral guidance.

³⁸¹ Bockle and Pohier, *Moral Formation*, 97-98.

³⁸² For this quotation see Franz Bockle and Jacques-Marie Pohier, *Moral Formation, and Christianity* (New York: Seabury, 1978), viii.

³⁸³ Roland Murphy, “*Moral Formation*” Pp. 29-36 in *Moral Formation and Christianity*. Edited by Franz Bockle and Jacques-Marie Pohier (New York: Seabury, 1978).

³⁸⁴ Murphy, “*Moral Formation*,” 30.

³⁸⁵ McDonald, *The Crucible of Christian*, 1.

³⁸⁶ McDonald, *The Crucible of Christian*, 1.

³⁸⁷ David Fergusson, *Church, State and Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 106.

2. The teaching of Jesus Christ: the Early Christians interpreted Christ as the fulfillment of Jewish hopes.
3. No one who knew the story and the teaching of Jesus' ministry could doubt the importance of showing and promoting love, non-violence, human well-being and reconciliation in a world that was often unloving and violent.³⁸⁸ Therefore Jesus was the model or norm of Early Christianity. The *Kerygma*, that is, his proclaimed message was a source of moral formation.
4. The moral life expressed in love for God and for neighbor was also another source.
5. Later, Paul's ethical exhortation became also a source for the early Church.

To sum up this section, briefly, the ethical exhortation of Paul furnished the basis for the formation of new communities, and his letters reflected the ethos of the communities. The moral formation in Early Christianity had as sources, the Hebrew Scripture, Jesus' teaching, and also the moral life expressed within the communities. Later, the ethical exhortation of Paul became also the sources of Christian morality. It is therefore true that we are influenced by many things, but our task is to reflect the ethos of the Early Christianity by expressing love for God and for neighbor.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter the aim was to reflect how one can read the Bible from a reconstructive religious perspective, and to develop a reconstructive reading of the New Testament from the example of Farisani's reading of Ezra-Nehemiah and Romans.

Indeed, reading the Bible from a reconstructive perspective is not clearly speaking about another reading process, rather it is a reading that focuses on the ideological issues that emerge from a sociological analysis of the text, and interpret these issues in the context.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ McDonald, *The crucible of Christian*, 9.

³⁸⁹ Interview with Farisani on 2 May 2009 on the Theology of Reconstruction. Unisa main Campus from 9h30-10h30.

The text of Romans 12:1-12 read from a reconstructive perspective has revealed that the author of the text ideologically supports or legitimates the ideology of power. The believers are requested not to be conformed to this world as the means to be renewed or transformed. The objective of this is to discern God's will which is to live in harmony with God and other members of the community.

Reconstruction in the context of Romans 12:1-2 is a process that starts with the awareness of sin and moves to restoration/renewal in order to achieve the newness of life among the members of the community. Finally, the ethical exhortation and moral formation of the Early Christianity derived from a 'leadership model'. In the following, I will look at the next chapter: toward a reconstructive religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Chapter 5: Towards a Reconstructive Religious Discourse in the DRC

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on how the reconstructive religious discourse can be applied in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In so doing, I will first highlight the strengths and weaknesses of current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and will then deal with the current social challenges that the Democratic Republic Congo faces today. The chapter will end by looking at the use of reconstructive religious discourse to address current Christian religious weaknesses and current social challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

5.2 The strengths and weaknesses of the current Christian religious discourse in the DRC

Having analysed the religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo with reference to the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Re-awakening Churches in the previous chapters, this chapter will highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this discourse. It has been demonstrated in Chapter Two of this study that the strength of the religious discourse of the Roman Catholic Church lies in the fact that the Catholic hierarchy focuses on social issues, with a view to restoring the living conditions and well-being of the Congolese people, and makes an effort to challenge the government. In contrast, the weakness of this discourse is that, firstly, it lacks resistance. This means saying ‘No’ to all injustices, oppression and indifference committed by the power. As Villa-Vincencio argues, “the prophetic “No” must continue to be part of the process of reconstruction. The church should continue to say “No” to all forms of exploitation and injustice wherever it occurs.³⁹⁰ Secondly, this discourse also, in my view, is not popularized at all it remains at top level of hierarchy.

Like the Roman Catholic Church, it has been shown in the previous chapter that the strength of the Protestant Church lies in the fact that it pays attention to the social situation of Congolese people.

³⁹⁰ Villa-Vicencio, *A theology of reconstruction*, 1.

However, the weakness of this discourse is that although it pays attention to social issues, it does not indicate exactly how to overcome these situations. The problem here is that if the Church really wants to give solution to the problem of Congo, it must have one discourse that mobilizes the nation, not two, and say this is what we need for the interest of the entire Congolese population. In other words, we cannot see concretely what is the position of Church in Democratic Republic of Congo with regard to the situation of the country. The Church as an institution must have a discourse either to accept what happens or to refute it.

With regard to the Re-awakening Churches, it has also been demonstrated in the previous chapters that the strength of their discourse lies in the fact that they gain the support of the population, and consequently there is a numerical growth in these churches. However, as Trefon argues, “the fact that churches may be filled on Sunday morning, however, does not mean that the Kinois believe that God can help them mitigate their survival problems.”³⁹¹ It is correct to argue that Congolese people in general, and Congolese Christians in particular, could go to Church, because it is only God who can change things if they really believe in him. Thus, in spite of this numerical growth, the weakness of the Reawakening Churches is that they lack social action with a view to restoring the living conditions and welfare of Congolese people. Furthermore, the discourse of the Re-awakening Churches does not challenge the government. The fact that these churches are not well organized or structured is unfortunate, because in my opinion, they could do better so many good things if they were organized and united.

In brief, the strength of the religious discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo on the whole lies in the fact that they do pay attention to social issues, and one can see an effort by the hierarchy of the Church to challenge the government. Nevertheless, the weaknesses of their discourse are the following:

- 1) Although they challenge the government, they lack resistance discourse, which is very important in all reconstruction processes. Resistance means to refuse all situations which are inhuman. In other terms, not to accept the unjust situations as being normal. As Villa-Vicencio argues, “the task of liberation theologians has been essentially to say ‘No’ to all forms of oppression.”³⁹²

³⁹¹ Trefon (ed.), *Reinventing Order in the Congo*, 14.

³⁹² Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, 1.

- 2) These religious discourses highlight the plight of the Congolese people, but do not identify ways in which their situation can be remedied. However, the task is not only to *denounce* ills, but also to *remove* them from society in order to reconstruct a renewed society.
- 3) The Christian religious discourses of the Democratic Republic of Congo are established at the top of the hierarchy (message of the bishops of the National Conference of the Congo; Proces-Verbal (Minutes) of National Synod of the Church of Christ of Congo), and are not, in my view, popularized. They remain at the level of the offices, and not all Christians have access to these discourses. The same for the Re-awakening Churches and the Kimbanguist Church. The case of the Kimbanguist Church where two discourses co-exist is a case in point. It is for this reason that this study proposes that where reconstructive discourses exist, they should be translated into the four national languages (Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba and Swahili), and read in the parishes. In addition, it is proposed that Christians participate in the creation of these discourses. In other words, Christians in the parishes should discuss all these social issues at the ground level, and engage the top levels of the church.
- 4) The Christian religious discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo suffer from the lack of a platform. There is no structure that speaks on behalf of the Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Each Church has its discourse; the Roman Catholic Church has its own discourse, the Protestant Church has its own, and the same goes for the Re-awakening Churches and Kimbanguist Church. This constitutes, in my view, a great obstacle to the effectiveness of the religious discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A platform composed of Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Re-awakening Churches and Kimbanguist Church, in my opinion, can better represent the Church in Democratic Republic of Congo, and speak in the name of the Church, and better challenge the powers that be.

After highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Christian religious discourses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I will now examine the current social challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

5.3 Current Social Challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo

After holding elections, and new institutions being established in 2006, there are still challenges which the Democratic Republic of Congo faces today. I will deal with some of the most widespread ones here. There are the problems of morality, corruption and violence which, in my view, that hinder the reconstruction and development of this country.

5.3.1 Morality

Among the important challenges facing the Democratic Republic of Congo today, which constitute obstacles to reconstruction and development, one can mention the issue of morality. The question of morality is very important in a society because if moral principles do not exist, that will give place to all kinds of evils. There will be injustice, violence, corruption and so on, and the consequences can be disastrous. And the Church has her answerability in this matter. As Durkheim reminds us, “religion and morality were originally undifferentiated”³⁹³ in the sense that “many of the moral principles of Western nations were derived from the ten commandments.”³⁹⁴

However, we need first to understand what ‘morality’ is. According to Coincaud and Warner, the term morality “is an evaluation of what is good and what is bad in absolute terms. It is praise of what is good and condemnation of what is bad.”³⁹⁵ In this sense, morality is the subject matter of ethics, and ethics refers to moral principles. Among these principles, there are, for example, the principles of lawfulness (not violating the law), justice (acknowledging a person’s rights), honesty (not deceiving others), and paternalism (assisting others in pursuing their best interests when they cannot do so themselves).³⁹⁶

However, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, these principles are not respected. As Theodore Trefon has observed, “the new morality in Kinshasa dictates that it is better to sell your soul to the devil than to be scrupulous.

³⁹³ For this quotation, see Levis R. Aiken, *Morality and Ethics in Theory and Practice* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 2004), 7.

³⁹⁴ Levis R. Aiken, *Morality and Ethics in Theory and Practice* (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 2004), 7.

³⁹⁵ Jean-Marc Coincaud, and Warner Daniel (eds), “Introduction: Reflections on the Extent and Limit of the Contemporary International Ethics.” in *Ethics and International Affairs: Extent & Limit*. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001), 3.

³⁹⁶ Aiken, *Morality and Ethics*, 90.

The current situation that requires one to meet immediate needs has replaced the respect of any righteous moral code.”³⁹⁷ In this situation, everyone at top levels in public or private enterprises works for his/her own interests, and the rights of those who are at the bottom are always violated, and the person’s freedom is not acknowledged. As Citizens’ Voice and Accountability Country Case Study-DRC reports, “the long period of crisis, depth of the recession and disastrous effects of bad governance on daily lives of the Congolese people have all led to an urgent desire among the population in general to do anything possible to emerge from the crisis situation as quickly possible.”³⁹⁸

In this perspective, morality in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as Trefon again argues, can be compared to Durkheim’s theory of anomie. Anomie is a situation whereby moral, cultural and legal norms are abandoned, thereby creating a social crisis.³⁹⁹ Morality in the Democratic Republic of Congo thus complies exactly with Durkheim’s theory of anomie. However, the question of morality in the Democratic Republic of Congo can be traced back to the MPR State Party. Some of Mobutu’s speeches reveal how he perceived civic morality, which is a clever form of political manipulation. For example, he said: *yiba kasi mingi te* (i.e., steal but not so much). But the consequences of all these are disastrous. In 2006, all the indicators of Democratic Republic of Congo were in the red zone. For example, the 2006 Global Integrity Report / Transparency International Report classified the Democratic Republic of Congo in 144th position, which indicates hopeless levels of corruption. the Democratic Republic of Congo was classified the 6th most corrupt country in the world and 3rd most corrupt in Africa.⁴⁰⁰

This is true because if the Congolese people are suffering today, among the reasons for this is that there is no morality. People are therefore committing injustices and enjoying it. As Swart asserts, “the unjust structures are the creation of people and are products of the greed and egotism that are deeply imbedded in human nature. The human spirit must be strengthened to the point that greed and egotism play a less dominant role.”⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ Theodore Trefon(ed.), *Reinventing Order in the Congo*, 21.

³⁹⁸ Citizens’ Voice and Accountability Democratic Republic of Congo, Country Case Study Final Report-March 2008 (cited from the online version: <http://www.drisconsult.eu/> accessed on 25 June 2010)

³⁹⁹ Trefon, *Reinventing Order*, 21.

⁴⁰⁰ Transparency International (cited from the online version: [http:// www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org) accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴⁰¹ Swart, *The Churches and Development*, 158.

In conclusion, from the above description it is clear that all the institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo and all sectors of society have been devastated, and that moral principles do not exist in the country at the moment. Thus, the issue of moral values needs to be tackled first. If the morality of the rulers does change, they will begin to rule properly; if the morality of the police also changes, then they will stop stealing from the population, and will start protecting them. Therefore, the issue of morality needs urgent resolution. In the next section, the researcher will examine another challenge which also undermines the Democratic Republic of Congo, namely, corruption.

5.3.2 Corruption

According to experts, corruption is the greatest and most severe disease of African governments. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, together with morality, human rights violations and mismanagement, corruption is one of the biggest problems and one which destabilizes and destroys this country. As a result, the Democratic Republic of Congo is known as one of the most corrupt and poorest countries in the world.⁴⁰²

As Van der Walt argues, “corruption has a tendency to spread rapidly and to grow. When it has infected a whole society, it is very difficult to fight.”⁴⁰³ Similarly, in the words of Daryl Balia, “corruption by its nature is highly elusive, can never be eradicated or eliminated, and is known to operate like a worm in a hole. When the hole is closed the worm moves to find another hole and so on.”⁴⁰⁴ In fact, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘corruption’ as the “perversion of a person’s integrity in the performance of duty or work by bribery.”⁴⁰⁵ Political corruption may be defined as “the unsanctioned, illegal, unethical and unauthorized exploitation of one’s political or official position, to use public resources or goods for personal gain, that is, for non-public ends.”⁴⁰⁶ Nepotism is thus an example of political corruption. However, among the factors that provoke corruption is the political system of the state, as the way in which a political system operates can favour corruption.

⁴⁰² USAID Democratic Republic of Congo (cited from the online version: <http://217.12.8.115/fr.Fr286.Mail.yahoo.com> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴⁰³ Van der Walt, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa*, 408.

⁴⁰⁴ Daryl Balia, “*Fighting Corruption: A challenge to Mission.*” Pp. 82-92 in *Making of an African Person: Essays in Honour of Willem A. Saayman*. Edited by Madze Karecki. Southern African Missiological Society. First Edition (2002).

⁴⁰⁵ Brown Lesley(ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 518.

⁴⁰⁶ For this quotation, see Van der Walt, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa*, 401.

Museveni states that “His country is corrupt because the system under which they live makes corruption easy and profitable.”⁴⁰⁷ That is true because if the state or the political system does not make easier the conditions of life of its population, corruption becomes unavoidable. In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, corruption is specifically related to the political system, and is one of the main causes of the economic/social situation in the country. It is therefore linked to the abject poverty of its population.

According to Muzong, the background to the problem of corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo can be traced back to Mobutu’s regime, and is followed by the regimes of Kabila the father and Kabila the son. He argues that “many of the corrupt practices occurring today and the behavior of the political elite can be traced back to their roots in Mobutu’s Zaire.”⁴⁰⁸ As USAID reports specify, “Mobutu Sese Seko amassed a vast personal fortune (believed to be USD 8 billion in the mid-eighties and in his own words only a total of USD 5 billion in 1998). Even though Zaire was regularly a place of rebellion and civil wars, Mobutu Sese Seko could stay in power.”⁴⁰⁹

In a similar vein, Nest reports that in 1990, many officials were involved in the smuggling of diamonds and other precious metals. The result of this was that Gecamines (the copper mining parastatal) could no longer provide significant revenues to the state.⁴¹⁰ The Report of the World Bank indicated the Governance Score was of -1.9 in 1998 and 1.9 in 2002.⁴¹¹ In addition, the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006 had a quantity of Hydroelectricity of 99.72%, but the rate of access to electricity was only 6% and access to potable water was 17%.⁴¹²

Under Laurent Desire Kabila, the Congolese people, who hoped that the new regime would put an end to corruption, were soon disappointed, because corruption continued to thrive with

⁴⁰⁷ Yoweri K. Museveni, *What is Africa’s problem?* (Kampala: NRM Publications, 1992), 75.

⁴⁰⁸ Kodi. W. Muzong, *Anti-Corruption Challenges in Post-elections Democratic Republic of Congo*. African Programme Report (January 2007), 6.

⁴⁰⁹ USAID *Democracy and Governance: Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo* (cited from the online version: <http://217.12.8.115/fr> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴¹⁰ Michael Nest, “*The Evolution of a Fragmented State: The case of DRC*”, *Paper : International Center for Advanced Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 36.

⁴¹¹ World Bank: *Governance Indicators 1996-2006 World Bank Policy Research*. Working Paper No. 4280 (cited from the online version: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=999979> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴¹² Seraphin Kasemuana, *Energy Systems: Vulnerability-Adaptation-Resilience Democratic Republic of Congo* (cited from the online version: <http://www.helio-international.org/reports/pdfs/congo.fr> accessed on 25 June 2010).

the looting of the state as much as it did during Mobutu's regime. Many mining contracts had been signed with a number of foreign companies under very opaque conditions,⁴¹³ especially during the period of conflict as clearly told in the following report:

The UN Expert Panel reports on the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo in April and November 2001 and May and October 2002 came to the clear conclusion that greed over the DRC's natural resources has played a significant role in prolonging the conflict. The conflict has become mainly about access control and trade of five key mineral resources: coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt and gold.⁴¹⁴

Even now, with new institutions which were established after the elections, corruption and favoritism prosper, like it was during the MPR's rule. For example, if an investor comes to invest in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the government asks him/her to first pay a percentage before he/she starts with his/her company. Other investors become discouraged and return to their countries. In addition, the salaries of the soldiers of FARDC have not been regularly paid, and millions of dollars are always being embezzled by Congolese generals.⁴¹⁵ In the mining sector, corruption is the biggest problem, the same as in the justice sector.

In the DRC, corruption, impunity and political clientelism have penetrated all areas of life. Unpaid for months or even years or poorly paid, state employees find salvation by practicing corruption. In addition, as Iyenda asserts:

corruption and immorality have settled in schools and universities since the 1990s. In many schools, especially in public schools and universities, pupils' marks, first written in pencil, could change many times as a result of the amount of money paid to teachers. Teachers also abuse and sexually harass their pupils and students. Teachers think that this behaviour is the only reward and salary they get, as they are unpaid for months.⁴¹⁶

From the above, it can be noted that corruption, theft, extortion, collusion, embezzlement, fraud, counterfeiting or prostitution are therefore different means used by people in order to survive. Unfortunately, however, corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the main causes of the collapse of the economy and impacts directly on the poor.

⁴¹³ Muzong, *Anti-Corruption Challenges*, 7.

⁴¹⁴ Citizens' Voice and Accountability Democratic Republic of Congo Country Case Study (cited from the online version: <http://www.driscnsult.eu/> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴¹⁵ Muzong, *Anti-Corruption Challenge*, 14.

⁴¹⁶ Iyenda, *Households' livelihoods*, 130.

Currently, ordinary people have stopped calling it ‘corruption’, and now call it ‘motivation’. Thus, in order to get a service you need, you have to motivate the person providing the service.

However, the worst of all this is that many of the civil society organizations that have denounced corruption and human rights violations have been threatened. For example, Pastor Kuntino, who tried to denounce these things, was arrested and has been imprisoned since 2006 until now.

From the above description, it is clear that corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the biggest problem and needs an urgent solution. This is because, in the researcher’s opinion, if the question of corruption is not resolved, the wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo will continue to enrich those who are in power, as well as their allies/masters. The Congolese people will then continue to be poor and will die poor. As Van der Walt puts it, “we need leaders who are committed to defending the interests of people and not their own. We badly need leaders who refrain from corrupt practices and the abuse of power for self-interest.”⁴¹⁷ In the next section, the researcher will look at another challenge, which is that of violence.

5.3.3 Violence

It is important to remember that the Congo is known worldwide as a country with a long history of human rights violations. In order to illustrate this, Nzongola notes that:

King Leopold II hired an international group of adventurers as CFS agents and the latter used so much terror and violence to extract wealth from the country and committed atrocities that the Christian missionaries and humanitarian organizations such as Edouard Morrel’s Congo Reform Association characterized as ‘crimes against humanity’.⁴¹⁸

Another source reports that during the first months of independence a systematic rape was popular tool of humiliation on Congolese soil.⁴¹⁹ The systematic rape is then a brutal tactic used in times of war, to terrorize women by sexually assaulting them.

⁴¹⁷ Van der Walt, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa*, 501.

⁴¹⁸ Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaire to Democratic Republic of Congo*, 7.

⁴¹⁹ USAID Democracy and Governance: Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo(cited from the online version: <http://217.12.8.115/fr> accessed on 15 July 2010).

Already after independence in 1960, the country was immediately faced with an army mutiny and an attempt at secession in the Katanga Province. A year later, the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, was arrested and killed by his loyal troops. Since independence, the Congo has been characterized by assassinations, civil wars, rebellion, political instability, etc.

However, as Iyenda asserts, “Mobutu was declared the world champion of human rights violations by international human rights organizations.”⁴²⁰ Today, the majority of Congolese agree that his regime was characterized by violence, nepotism, a personality cult, flagrant human rights abuses, the absence of freedom of expression, and corruption, in which Mobutu and his entourage were implicated. After the overthrowing of Mobutu by Laurent Kabila in 1997, the war that began in August 1998 “claimed an estimated three million lives, either as a direct result of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition.”⁴²¹ The International Rescue Committee estimated that more than 3.3 million people had died in the Congolese conflict between 1998 and 2002.⁴²² During the war, villages were burnt, people killed and women raped. While the country emerged from the war in 2003, credible mortality studies estimated that up to 1,200 people continued to die each day from conflict, disease and malnutrition and violence.⁴²³

When Joseph Kabila obtained the mandate to rule the country through the elections in 2006, the Congolese people expected that these elections would bring stability and peace to the country. Unfortunately, however, on the contrary, the violence became even more indiscriminate. Killings and brutal sexual violence against women, girls and men have increased significantly, especially in the eastern part of the country.

In addition to this, the Congolese people of the Oriental Province are often victims of a Ugandan rebel group, The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The Lord’s Resistance Army has been present in Dungu territory since 2005 terrorizing the population, looting food stocks, burning down houses, injuring, raping, and killing civilians, and kidnapping children and adults.

⁴²⁰ Iyenda, *Households’ livelihoods*, 150.

⁴²¹ BBC News. *Africa Country Profiles: Democratic Republic of Congo* (cited from the online version: <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴²² International Rescue Committee, “*Morality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An ongoing Process*” (cited from the online version: <http://www.theirc.org/resourses> accessed on 25 June 2010).

⁴²³ International Crisis Group: DR Congo (cited from the online version: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1174> accessed on 25 June 2010).

These attacks have had devastating consequences for the civilian population, it is estimated that since September 2009 more than 500 children have been abducted, 800 civilians have been killed, an unknown number of women have been victims of sexual violence and over 162,000 persons have been displaced from their homes.⁴²⁴ In New York, USA, on 13 March 2009, it was reported that the LRA has killed more than 900 people in the North region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, hundreds of children have been abducted and tens of thousands of Congolese have been displaced by the fighting.⁴²⁵

With regard to the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the governments of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, whose troops occupy parts of Eastern DRC, were profiting from the conflict by looting diamonds, gold and other precious minerals.⁴²⁶ Similarly, foreign forces allied with the Congolese government, namely Angola, Namibia and especially Zimbabwe, were also profiting from the conflict through economic deals and agreements, the exploitation of mines and other contracts. As Iyenda puts it:

Because of the mounting of pressure from the world, the UN sent a panel of experts to the Congo and other African countries to investigate the situation relating to illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The panel report concluded that the main reason behind the civil war in the Congo was the looting and illegal trade of its wealth especially, diamond, copper, gold, cobalt, timber, coltan, coffee, cocoa, and many others.⁴²⁷

In conclusion, from the above, it is not difficult to see that the state in the Democratic Republic of Congo complies with the majority of the characteristics of a failed state, in which one can find the following: an increase in violence, civil war and terror, a collapsed health system, and a declining rate of GDP per capita. Therefore, in order to avoid violence, the Democratic Republic of Congo must have a strong government capable of protecting the country against these internal and external vulnerabilities. However, in the researcher's view, the Congolese people must also adhere to moral principles in order to live in harmony with one another. Violence creates instability, and it is impossible to build a country where there is violence and instability.

⁴²⁴ Transparency International (cited from the online version: <http://www.transparency.org> accessed on 31 October 2009).

⁴²⁵ UNICEF-Congo Democratic Republic-Death in Dungen: Rebel violence (cited from the online version: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo_48662.html accessed on 31/10/2009).

⁴²⁶ Guillaume Iyenda, *Households' livelihoods and survival strategies among Congolese urban people*, 62-64.

⁴²⁷ Iyenda, *Households' livelihoods*, 62 (see also Nzongola-Ntalaja, *From Zaïre to Democratic Republic of Congo*, 3).

5.4 Theological analysis

Morality, corruption and violence are dialectically related in the sense that morality determines how the other two issues develop. Corruption and violence are the consequence of morality or rather the absence of it. Good morality is the source of peace and love for one another, whereas bad morality is the source of lust, covetousness, pride, injustice, terror, violence, and war. This study has shown that the Democratic Republic of Congo is portrayed as a country which is in deep crisis. It clearly faces a great moral crisis. Consequently, it has been viewed as a country with gross violation of human rights, a high level of corruption and abject poverty.

It is true that the existence of poverty in the world can be the result of structural elements producing injustice and inequality. However, theologically speaking, as Swart argues, “the unjust structures are the creation of people and the products of the greed and egotism that are deeply imbedded in human nature.”⁴²⁸ As already asserted, ruthless greed is selfishness because it works at the expense of others. How many highly educated youth are there in the Congo who finish their studies but cannot find jobs? How is it that in a country as potentially rich as the Democratic Republic of Congo, nearly 50 per cent of the population eats only one meal per day?

Without doubt, 80% of Congolese people (Christians) pray and worship God by giving him all the possible offering as it has been noted in the introduction of this study. But, the question is if this worship is a worship that honors God (*logike latreia*), and if really Christians cease living according to the worldly standards and becomes then able to discern the will of God which embraces our relationship with God, with ourselves and each another? In view of this study, the reconstruction of the DRC is possible if Christian first reconciles with God by the rejection of worldly standards with its spirit of selfishness and its pursuits that are the pleasing of self and the domination of the evil symbolized by the corruption, violence, immorality, injustice, killing, rape, hatred and so on. Concretely, Christian must have awareness of God’s holiness and awareness of depth of sin by an act of inward change, in order to be renewed and become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). In so doing, the Christians can become the persons committed to a new set of beliefs and style of life.

⁴²⁸ Swart, *The Churches and Development Debate*, 158.

As already noted in this chapter, the good morality is source of peace and love. The Congolese Christians in this context can play the role of Moral formation. For that, they must help the other Congolese to find the true values, because their moral life is expressed in love for God and for neighbor. For that, “the human spirit must be strengthened to the point that greed of egotism plays a less dominant role.”⁴²⁹ However, it is the Church as the body of Christ that this task comes back. The Church must play its role in dealing with the people of God in striving to make a transformative impact on the society around her.

Nevertheless, it is also true that we cannot expect that the Church that speaks against the evils in society will be appreciated, just like Amos, who was not appreciated when he spoke against the evils in his society, so also the Church cannot be appreciated. However, the Church must stand and speak in order to play a significant role in society.

5.5 The use of reconstructive religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Having briefly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and after reviewing some challenges that the Democratic Republic of Congo faces today, and the theological analysis made above, I will now in this section, focus on how a Christian reconstructive religious discourse may be used in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to respond to the weaknesses of the current religious discourse in the Congo and the challenges which we have examined. By doing so I will first spell out what now I understand by a Christian reconstructive discourse, and then I will also spell out the concrete situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to show in what ways a Christian religious discourse can contribute to alleviating the situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo. And finally, I will discuss the nature, realization, strengths and weaknesses of the Christian reconstructive discourse and the obstacles to its realization in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and will also show the value of this reconstructive religious discourse.

As already asserted, the Christian reconstructive religious discourse spoken about here is:

⁴²⁹ Swart, *The Churches and Development Debate*, 158.

- Christian, since it is action taken by the Church with a view of to restore the people in turning them away from the greed of domination/exploitation and so on,
- Social, because it contains an action that aims the change of human living conditions, and
- Religious, in the sense that it is produced by a religious institution (i.e., the Church).

The concrete situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the other hand, after 32 years of dictatorship and a long transition, is characterized by ongoing conflicts, the deterioration of the socioeconomic situation of the country, dilapidation of the basic economic and social infrastructures, poor management of the national resources, the majority of the population living under abject poverty, loss of millions of human lives, and abandonment by the state of its essential public service responsibilities. Consequently, the Country has become one of the poorest countries in the world.

In order to deal with these challenges, the Church with its reconstructive religious discourse can contribute to the situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo as follows: The message of (Romans 12:1-2) is that Christians must not conform to the world, in order to discern the will of God. In so doing, they become transformed in order to transform their respective communities. in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, that means to put off the greed of immorality, violence, corruption, and become a new creation in order to transform the Congolese society (2 Cor 5:17).

5.5.1 Its nature and realization

First it is worth to notice that my intention is to translate the work in French. Also, the content will be popularized through Conferences, Seminars and Broadcasting.

In order to attain its goal of constructing a renewed society, four guidelines need to be followed by the reconstructive religious discourse:

- 1) This discourse should be established at the ground level (the faithful masses) before being sent to the top level for completion;
- 2) This discourse should be a resistant discourse, which means that it should say ‘No’ to all forms of oppression, injustice, corruption, violence and mismanagement committed by the government, its members and other people in positions of power;
- 3) After completion, this discourse should be translated into 4 national languages (Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba and Swahili) and read in the parishes, in order to become popularized.

The reason for this is that the majority of Congolese people is unlettered, and the medias in Democratic Republic of Congo is close to the set of power. The cause of the ongoing moral, socio-economic and political malaise seems to be well known only by well educated people and clergy.

- 4) A religious platform or structure must be established to speak in the name of the Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This means that the discourse should be interdisciplinary and ecumenical. Here a broad approach is needed for the development of the discourse of inclusion, the development of a shared vocabulary where Christians of various denominations, may share experiences and concerns for their own country.

5.5.2 The value and strength of a reconstructive religious discourse

Firstly, the value of this discourse lies in the fact that it aims at the renewal/transformation of the society/community through the renewal of a person.

Secondly, it is a resistant discourse that says ‘No’ to all forms of domination and oppression; that is, a discourse that refuses to be oppressed and promotes liberation from corruption, violence, injustice and all other alienating situations.

Thirdly, it is interdisciplinary and ecumenical; that is, it is a platform that speaks on behalf of all the Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Fourthly, its strength also lies in its accessibility to the people on the ground. It cannot afford to be an elitist discourse.

5.5.3 The weaknesses and obstacles to its realization

The great weakness of this discourse lies in its application. Experience reminds us that many discourses have been formulated but few were successfully applied. The challenge here is in its application.

Indeed, the threats that are made by those in power are great obstacles to the realization of this discourse. It is really regrettable that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, those who come with good ideas/initiatives or denounce evils in society are often fought against. As has been previously mentioned, those who speak out on issues related to injustice, human rights violations, etc. are objects of intimidation and threats. However, the Church is not a person, it

is an institution, and it must play its role and respond to the plight of the poor and marginalized.

As Swart asserts, the Church must first of all have in view the poor, marginalized and oppressed and their transformation, to the extent that they can be true beneficiaries and subjects of development.⁴³⁰

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the current religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition, he also examined some challenges which the Democratic Republic of Congo faces today. In order to address these challenges, a Christian reconstructive religious discourse has been suggested in order to reinforce the current religious discourse already existing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This study does not believe that this discourse is a magical solution. Nevertheless, it is suggested as one among the many solutions to the problems that Congolese people face today, if it is properly applied. However, its application is not a simple matter.

However, in this chapter the question was how the Christian reconstructive religious discourse can be applied in the context of the DRC. The study then should examine first the strengths and weaknesses of the current Christians religious discourse in the DRC and second the current challenges which the DRC faces today. From this examination, it is clear that the question the non-religious people ask is that if there is 80 percent of Christians in the DRC, why things are like this? To this question, this study is of view that among other causes, there is a lack of credibility of behalf of the Church in the DRC (cf. chapter 2). There is no doubt as it has been mentioned that the conflict in the DRC has had disastrous effects on the population. Many Congolese are still outside the country, and the country needs these human resources for the reconstruction.

Now how the Church can help or could engage in the reconciliation process if she herself is source of conflicts, division, and immorality. The case of Rwanda where certain Church leaders and prominent Christians were involved in the killings is illustrative.

⁴³⁰ Swart, *The Churches and Development Debate*, 218.

The Church must keep its credibility and then have the courage for to deal with the ethnic conflicts as Nehemiah and Paul the Apostle have done. In addition, according this research the DRC is a country where one can find all evils: corruption, violence, murder, power oppression and the like. The Congolese people must reconcile with God by an act of renewal of mind. Concretely, he must put off the greed of hate, corruption, violence, tribalism... and put on Jesus Christ in order to be renewed. In so doing he will become a new creation that is an agent of transformation in order to reconstruct the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In the first chapter, the argument was formulated by means of the question: how could the current Congolese Christian religious discourse be ameliorated in order to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction and social development of the post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo? The hypothesis was that a Christian reconstructive religious discourse has a meaningful role to play in the context of awareness with a view to the reconstruction of post-colonial Democratic Republic of Congo.

Thus, this study aimed to improve the current Christian religious discourse in order for the Church to play properly its role in the context of reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Indeed, I assumed that in the context of Democratic Republic of Congo today, where moral principles do not exist, where the legal norms of society have been abandoned, where corruption, impunity and political clientelism have penetrated practically all areas of life, where there is a constant increase in violence, ethnic war and terrorism, where the majority of youth have the single objective of leaving the country and going abroad to build a better life, undertaking a study on biblical interpretation as social reconstructive religious discourse, will be very useful as a means of equipping the Church in Democratic Republic of Congo with a Christian reconstructive religious discourse, in order to play a leading role in the rebuilding of this country.

In this regard, it was necessary, firstly, to analyze and evaluate the current religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Roman Catholic, Protestant, Re-awakening and Kimbanguist Churches were chosen for this aspect. Secondly, it seemed necessary to reflect on Reconstruction Theology. The following three scholars were chosen in this regard: Kä Mana, Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio. Thirdly, it seemed appropriate to read the Bible from a reconstructive religious perspective, and Romans 12:1-2 was the text of choice. We ended with the way toward a Christian Reconstructive Religious Discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this chapter, I will briefly summarize the previous conclusions that were drawn and then proceed to an evaluation of the findings.

6.2 Brief summary of the conclusions drawn

The first chapter presents a general overview of what this study is all about. The problem under investigation, the aim and objectives of the study, motivation for the study, as well as the methodology were discussed. A brief overview of the social, political and economical situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo was also provided. From this overview, it was revealed that the social life of Congolese people is miserable. The social system as a whole is very bad, and the life is lived like a game of chance, with uncertainty about the future. Furthermore, the political system put in place is not conducive to creating a unified society and promoting social development. Rather, it is characterized by all kinds of evils: immorality, corruption, violence and insensitivity to people's problems. The chapter ended with an outline of the chapters contained in this study.

The second chapter, which focussed on the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, selected four religious groups and analyzed them by examining their beliefs about social issues, with an evaluation of each group. This analysis revealed that the current overall Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo is good in the sense that it pays some attention to social issues, and also makes an effort to challenge the government. Nevertheless, the weaknesses lie in the fact that firstly, there is not one Christian discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but several Christian religious discourses. And secondly although this Christian discourse highlights the plight of the Congolese people, it does not show how this situation can be ameliorated. Thirdly, this discourse is not popularized at all. And fourthly, this discourse suffers from a lack of a platform that must speak on behalf of the Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In the third chapter which deals with reconstruction theology, the point of view of three African scholars were examined and discussed. The definition, strengths, and weaknesses of this reconstruction theology have also been presented. From this analysis, it appeared that these three reconstructionists advocate reconstruction as a new paradigm which moves from liberation to reconstruction. They agree that the 21st century creates a new context, and this new context requires a new paradigm capable of dealing with the situation of the moment, which is reconstruction theology. However, they justify their choice in terms of the failure of liberation theology, which did not play properly its role in post-colonial Africa.

For them, political liberation in Africa has not changed the realities of the daily social life of millions of African people who still live in misery and abject poverty.⁴³¹ Hence, the new paradigm was necessary. However, liberation remains a departure point for reconstruction. As previously mentioned, reconstruction must begin with liberation, and reconstruction without liberation is impossible. Reconstruction cannot be separated from liberation, in the sense that reconstruction is an act of liberation. The weakness of reconstruction theology lies in the fact that it minimizes the role played by liberation theology during colonization.⁴³² In addition to this, another weakness of reconstruction theology lies in the fact that little attention is paid to the analysis of biblical text. However, reconstruction theology not only denounces the ills, but look at removing them from society in order to reconstruct a renewed/restored society.

In the fourth chapter the study reflected on how the Bible can be read from a reconstructive religious perspective, and to develop a reconstructive reading of the New Testament from the example of Farisani's reading of Ezra-Nehemiah and Romans. Reading Romans 12:1-2 from a reconstructive perspective revealed that the author of Romans ideologically supports or legitimates the ideology of power. On the other hand, the believers are requested not to be conformed to this world as means for renewal. The chapter ends with what reconstruction is in the socio-historical context of Romans.

In chapter five, the study focused on how a reconstructive religious discourse can be applied in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This chapter first highlighted the strengths and weakness of the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and then proceeded to examine the current social challenges in this country. It ended with a look at the use of a reconstructive religious discourse to address these current weaknesses and social challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, the use of this discourse has revealed its nature, realizations, strengths weaknesses and the obstacles involved in its realization. Its strengths lie in the fact that it aims at the renewal of community by improving the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

⁴³¹ Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal in African Christian Theology*, 143.

⁴³² Maluleke, "The proposal for a Theology of Reconstruction", 245 (see also Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction & Renewal in African Christian Theology*, 86).

On the other hand, the main limitation of this discourse would be its application. The chapter then ends with the conviction that a Christian reconstructive religious discourse can play a meaningful role in this regard. It does not give a final solution to the complex problems with which society is confronted, but offers the possibility of creating a new society of men and women without asymmetrical relationships. This is because we believe that with God, nothing is impossible.

6.3 Evaluation

This study revealed, in the introduction that the social, political and economical situation in Democratic Republic of Congo is very bad. In addition, the violence, conflicts and wars have resulted in the Congo becoming “the world’s worst humanitarian crisis”. Many young people are already leaving this country and going abroad in order to build a better life. This has a negative effect on the exercising of authority of the state. In my opinion, the first responsibility goes to the Congolese state. However, the government of the Republic must be a government of freedom as Patrick Joyce emphasizes in the following quotation. This government of freedom, according to him:

May be analyzed in terms of development of technologies or private improvement and responsibility; the home was to be transformed into a purified cleansed, moralized, domestic space. It was to undertake the moral training of its children. It was to focus the dangerous passions of adults tearing them away from public vice, the gin palace and the gambling hall, imposing a duty of responsibility to each other, to home and children, and a wish to better their own condition. The family from then on plays a key role in forms of government through freedom.⁴³³

Indeed, this study also showed that in this abnormal situation, there is a Christian religious discourse preached either in traditional or re-awakening Churches. This, as Theissen argues is “the function of religion, since this can contribute in a variety of ways towards fulfilling the basic aims of society, namely in achieving the integration of its members and overcoming conflicts through change.”⁴³⁴ However, it should be emphasized here that I am not saying that this discourse is not useful, but rather that this discourse has its strengths and weaknesses which can be ameliorated in order to play a meaningful role in the reconstruction of this country.

⁴³³ Joyce, *Class*, 218.

⁴³⁴ Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus*, 2.

I will now try to show how this discourse is useful, and at the same time in what ways it can be ameliorated. In fact, the current Christian religious discourse in Democratic Republic of Congo is good in terms of the fact that it pays attention to the social issues of Congolese people, and makes an effort to challenge the government in terms of certain aspects of national life. On the other hand, the current religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo lacks sincere criticism and resistance, which means to say ‘No’ to all forms of oppression and marginalization. In addition, in spite of the fact that this discourse highlights the plight of Congolese people, it does not indicate how to get out of this situation.

In light of above, it can be argued that because of this, the current Christian religious discourse can be improved in order to become capable of equipping pastors, theologians, and Congolese intellectuals with a discourse suitable for the reconstruction of this country. In this regard, I will briefly demonstrate why a Christian reconstructive religious discourse is a necessity at this time.

Firstly, a Christian reconstructive religious discourse aims at the renewal and transformation of society by removing the evil within the community. Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, violence, corruption, etc. must be removed in order to reconstruct a just society according to God’s vision.

Secondly, a Christian reconstructive religious discourse is discourse that is popularized because of its accessibility to all the social strata of population.

Thirdly, a Christian reconstructive religious discourse looks for an utopian vision, which aims at the establishment of a new social organization which eliminates evil, by that people themselves remake their world, rather than waiting for a divine power to come to destroy.⁴³⁵

Fourthly, a Christian reconstructive religious discourse is interdisciplinary or ecumenical, a platform which speaks on behalf of all Churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Nevertheless, this study acknowledges that the main weakness of this discourse lies in the difficulty of its application.

⁴³⁵ G. van den Heever (ed.), “*Making Mysteries from the untergan der Mysterian to imperial mysteries: social discourse in Religion and the study of Religion.*” *Religion & Theology* 12, No.3&4 (2004): 262-308.

6.4 Conclusion

At this stage, it is important to note that the current Christian religious discourse in the Democratic Republic of Congo is good, but it must be ameliorated in order to play a leading role in the reconstruction of this country. A Christian reconstructive religious discourse empowers pastors, theologians and Congolese intellectuals aware of exactly what is happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and enables them to find a way out of the situation in which they currently find themselves.

It can be concluding as Swart says:

We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political and social problems of the earth. However, they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs or legal regulations alone: a change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the 'hearts' of people, and conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life.⁴³⁶

This is why I believe that a Christian reconstructive religious discourse is suitable during this time of reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Because, I think it is capable of changing the whole mentality of Congolese people, in order for them to reconstruct this beautiful and rich country that God gave them.

⁴³⁶ Swart, *The Churches and Development Debate*, 230.

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