

AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND MISSIOLOGY: A  
PERSPECTIVE FROM MISSION PRAXIS

By

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DECLARATION

**I declare that AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND MISSIOLOGY: A PERSPECTIVE FROM MISSION PRAXIS is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.**

Signed at Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria on 28 June 2010

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## COUNCIL OF THE UNIVERSITY: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	v
ABBREVIATIONS .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
1 THE INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 An introduction .....	1
1.2 The statement of the problem .....	3
1.3 The research question .....	5
1.3.1 On background issues .....	6
1.3.2 On the current state of Africa .....	6
1.3.3 In retrospection of Africa’s heritage .....	6
1.3.4 Inquiring on the engagement with Africa’s spirituality .....	7
1.3.5 On where the African Renaissance program should begin .....	7
1.3.6 Thesis question.....	8
1.4 The relevance of the study.....	8
1.5 The Timing of the Study .....	9
1.6 Research method.....	10
1.6.1 Sources:.....	10
1.7 Terminology, concepts and conceptual scope of research .....	11
1.8 Personal stance .....	12
1.9 The structure of chapters .....	13
CHAPTER 2.....	15
2 AFRICA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21 <sup>ST</sup> CENTURY .....	15
2.1 Introduction .....	15
2.2 Africa—the quest for identity .....	15
2.3 What Africa? — The name is problem <i>specific</i> . .....	16
2.4 The Colonial era.....	19
2.4.1 North Africa.....	20
2.4.2 The case of Sahara and Sudan .....	21
2.4.3 Colonialism and nation states .....	23
2.4.4 The lasting legacy of colonialism .....	24
2.4.5 Sustenance to colonial power and influence through foreign trade.....	26
2.5 Decolonisation of Africa .....	27
2.6 National life in Africa at the beginning of 21 <sup>st</sup> century .....	28
2.6.1 Political economy .....	29
2.6.2 Agriculture:.....	31
2.6.3 Mining and drilling .....	31
2.6.4 Manufacturing .....	32
2.6.5 Investment and banking.....	32
2.6.6 Geography .....	33
2.6.7 Borders .....	34
2.6.8 Language issues.....	35
2.6.9 Xenophobia and the problems it poses to cooperation .....	36
2.6.10 Diseases .....	38
2.7 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 2 .....	39
2.8 Critical pointers for the African Renaissance and Missiology .....	40

CHAPTER 3.....	41
3 THE CALL FOR AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE .....	41
3.1 Background history .....	41
3.2 When & by whom was the call made? .....	41
3.3 The prominence of the call by Thabo Mbeki .....	42
3.4 Precursors to the African Renaissance call.....	49
3.4.1 Pixley ka Isaka Seme .....	50
3.4.2 Len Bloom.....	51
3.5 The rationale behind the call for the African Renaissance .....	51
3.5.1 A continent in despair .....	52
3.5.2 African identity and legitimacy .....	52
3.5.3 A post-nationalist stance.....	53
3.5.4 The transformation mode.....	54
3.5.5 The development focus .....	54
3.6 Critics and sceptics of the African Renaissance call .....	55
3.6.1 Conceptual and philosophical arguments .....	55
3.6.2 Real and practical problems .....	57
3.7 Optimists and supporters of the African Renaissance call .....	62
3.7.1 Exchanging bullet with ballot.....	62
3.7.2 Mandela’s four point strategy for success.....	64
3.8 Critical status of important role players .....	67
3.8.1 Kofi Annan, former General Secretary of the United Nations.....	68
3.8.2 Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria .....	69
3.8.3 Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa .....	71
3.9 Any hope beyond the present African Renaissance cartel? .....	72
3.10 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 3.....	73
3.11 Some pointers to the Missiological dimension .....	74
CHAPTER 4.....	75
4 THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE.....	75
4.1 Introduction .....	75
4.2 Who determines the content of the African Renaissance?.....	75
4.2.1 The role of agents in the African Renaissance ‘dream’.....	76
4.2.2 The role of the Intelligentsia and academia in the African debate.....	77
4.2.3 The role of politicians and governments in the AR movement.....	80
4.2.4 The role of the ‘ordinary’ people on the AR landscape .....	82
4.2.5 The influence of institutions on the African Renaissance project? .....	88
4.2.6 The role of external nations on the African Renaissance dream.....	92
4.3 What determines the Content of the African Renaissance? .....	94
4.3.1 An introduction.....	94
4.3.2 The needs hypothesis.....	95
4.3.3 The importance of policy-making .....	96
4.3.4 The spirit and fact of Africa’s iconic past.....	97
4.3.5 Novelty and self-seeking glory .....	98
4.4 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 4.....	99
4.5 Pointers to the Missiological dimension .....	100
CHAPTER 5.....	101
5 DIMENSIONS OF A MISSIOLOGICAL CHALLENGE.....	101
5.1 An introduction .....	101

5.2	Breaking the silence.....	101
5.3	The irony of religion.....	103
5.3.1	South Africa and the Apartheid dispensation:.....	104
5.3.2	Rwandan Genocide: an indictment against the church.....	105
5.3.3	Northern and Western Africa and Islamic turbulence.....	106
5.3.4	“Is Africa incurably religious?”.....	107
5.4	Why Missiology?.....	112
5.5	Rebirth.....	113
5.5.1	Concepts and images of rebirth.....	114
5.6	Renaissance as Reincarnation.....	115
5.6.1	Continuity versus discontinuity.....	116
5.6.2	Evolving consciousness.....	117
5.7	Renaissance as resurrection.....	119
5.8	Hope as a crucial tenet of resurrection.....	120
5.8.1	Resuscitating the old.....	122
5.8.2	New life and new era.....	124
5.9	Renaissance as being ‘born-again’.....	126
5.10	A preliminary conclusion on Chapter Five.....	128
CHAPTER 6	.....	130
6	THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND THE CYCLE OF MISSIONARY PRAXIS.....	130
6.1	The cycle of missionary praxis.....	130
6.2	Spirituality.....	132
6.2.1	Different types of Spirituality.....	132
6.2.2	Prophetic spirituality.....	134
6.3	Agency.....	137
6.3.1	Recapping on ‘role players’ in the African Renaissance:.....	138
6.3.2	A transformed agency from a Missiological Perspective.....	139
6.3.3	The Priesthood of believers.....	140
6.3.4	Five-fold ministries (Eph.4:11-12).....	142
6.4	Contextual understanding.....	148
6.4.1	The shape of the new Africa.....	148
6.4.2	A Missiological contribution towards an African Renaissance.....	154
6.4.3	Environmental degradation and missions.....	156
6.4.4	Transformation of the context: Going to the ‘valley of bones’.....	157
6.4.5	Transfer of skills and missions.....	158
6.5	Ecclesial scrutiny.....	159
6.5.1	Recapping on the AR’s neglect of Church and mission.....	159
6.5.2	The role of the Church and mission.....	160
6.5.3	The Church’s Missionary-missional impact.....	163
6.6	Theological interpretation.....	169
6.6.1	General theological issues.....	169
6.6.2	Error committed ‘In the name of the Lord...’.....	170
6.6.3	Self-centered and self-serving ministries.....	170
6.6.4	Superficial and non-critical theology.....	171
6.6.5	Ways of reading the Bible.....	172
6.6.6	Missionary praxis: a Lifelong learning endeavour.....	174
6.6.7	Theology and the call for an African Renaissance.....	175

6.7	Strategic planning .....	176
6.7.1	Methods, activities and projects .....	176
6.7.2	Church and mission in social projects .....	179
6.7.3	Corruption and morality .....	186
6.8	Reflexivity .....	187
6.8.1	Responsive interactivity in the praxis cycle .....	187
6.8.2	Reflecting <i>on past experiences</i> .....	188
6.9	A preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 6 .....	193
CHAPTER 7	.....	194
7	CONCLUSION .....	194
7.1	A concluding message for African Renaissance protagonists .....	194
7.2	A concluding message for Church and Mission practitioners .....	197
7.3	The way forward: Producing new knowledge .....	198
8	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	199

## SUMMARY

This thesis is an endeavour to participate in the call for the African Renaissance from a missiological perspective. The study observes how the debate about this African 'dream' persists in the domain of intellectuals and political leaders. It recognises as timely the opportunity to contribute theologically to the development of the renaissance concept. It also observes that ordinary people have jumped onto the African Renaissance bandwagon albeit for reasons that are mainly sentimental. Hence a two-fold appeal to protagonists of the African Renaissance movement: firstly, to be inclusive of all stakeholders especially ordinary people who should be both participants and co-beneficiaries; secondly, to consider spirituality as an indispensable factor in birthing this African 'dream'. To help arrive at a well-considered argument the study discusses a brief history of Africa's economic, social and political development. Central to this history is how the human factor, actively or inadvertently, and the natural factors have devastated the continent thus necessitating a rebirth. The study notes how especially the political economy and issues of good governance of African states are key concerns to the protagonists of the renaissance movement. It also notes the establishment of structures and policies in addressing these concerns. These interventions are hoped to improve the continent's image towards its global counterparts and to lift the hopes of distraught African peoples. The prospect of their success in terms of probabilities and/or perceptions is discussed and Missiologically critiqued. An overview of these endeavours has led to the observation of a lingering chasm of the absence or the apparent sidelining of African spirituality as a necessary component of the African Renaissance discourse. As a major thrust of this thesis the spiritual notion of 'rebirth' is advanced. The basis for this argument lies in the 'rebirth' concept that is inherent in many religions, faith formations and philosophies akin to African spirituality. It is on this understanding that a Missiological dimension is build. In introducing this spiritual dimension towards an African Renaissance a Missiological methodology of a seven pointed praxis cycle is proposed and unpacked. In deconstructing this methodology



real models are presented as examples to illustrate Missiology's contextual life-long learning philosophy.

**Key terms:**

African Renaissance, rebirth, African identity, political economy, colonialism, contextual Missiology, praxis cycle, agency, spirituality, contextual understanding, theological interpretation, ecclesial scrutiny, strategic planning, reflexivity.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Afdb	:	African Development Bank
AIDS	:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	:	African National Congress
APRM	:	African Peer Review Mechanism
ARI	:	African Renaissance Institute
AU	:	African Union
COMESA	:	Common Market For Eastern And Southern Africa
ECA	:	Economic Commission For Africa
ECCAS	:	Economic Community Of Central African States
ECOWAS	:	Economic Community Of West Africa States
EU	:	European Union
HIV	:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	:	Institute for Contextual Theology
IMF	:	International Monetary Fund
MAP	:	Millennium African Recovery Program
NAI	:	New African Initiative
NEPAD	:	New Partnership For Africa's Development
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
OAU	:	Organisation Of African Unity)
PAP	:	Pan-African Parliament
RDP	:	Reconstruction And Development Programme
SADC	:	Southern African Development Community
UN	:	United Nations
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	:	United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees
WTO	:	World Trade Organisation

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### **To all and sundry**

Lastly, but not least, to all the academic 'casualties', all the doubting 'Thomases', the discouraged, the marginalised, the ill, the sick, overburdened, weary-bodied, the demotivated ... Look at me! This one is also for you, shake all those cobwebs and believe in yourself, you too can make it!

**“... Throw off everything that hinders ... run with perseverance the race marked for you” (Hebrews 12:1)**

## CHAPTER 1

### 1 THE INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 An introduction

The term, "African Renaissance" has recently<sup>1</sup> turned out to be a fashionable catch phrase that goes up just about any wall to label a spaza<sup>2</sup> shop in a dusty township street, a fast-food outlet somewhere around the street corner to lure passers-by, a bash<sup>3</sup> that lays claim to musical sounds of the so-called *African Renaissance*, or some kind of jazz festival proudly hoisting an advertisement to the claims of a new concoction of African sounds.

The question arises, though, as to whether people should begin to understand in the use of this term, "African Renaissance", a romantic era of cultural euphoria, or whether there is something much deeper to ponder about when this concept flows out of the mouths of some of Africa's politicians. For instance, what does the South African former Head of State, Mr Thabo Mbeki, mean by this term to which he has almost become synonymous? It is such questions that compel us to explore the significance of Mr Mbeki in this renaissance movement so as to create an understanding of what lies at the core of the movement.

Characteristic to most -- if not all -- renaissance movements, the African Renaissance, as anticipated, should be perceived in the light of a perceived catalyst impetus towards wholesome and comprehensive changes of unprecedented proportion throughout the length and breadth of the continent. In the light of such desired changes, it is not incomprehensible to tie the discussion on African Renaissance to the notion of the "Unity of Africa", otherwise stated by some as the "United States of Africa"<sup>4</sup>. Already several authors have ventured in exploring

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<sup>1</sup> Notably with the rise to presidency by Mr Thabo Mbeki (former president of South Africa 1999-2008).

<sup>2</sup> A South African colloquial for a small informal shop.

<sup>3</sup> A popular street party.

<sup>4</sup> Africa Institute of South Africa hosted its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference on the theme, 'A United State of Africa', held in Pretoria, 30May -2June, 2000. (cf. Maloka, E. (ed.). 2001. *A United States of Africa?* Pretoria: Africa Institute of Africa and Desmond-Smith, Capt. 1945.

the possibility of the structural unity of Africa and some even sarcastically suggesting it as the new "USA". Critical to both concepts, however, is the question whether the coincidence of the call for "African Renaissance" and that of the "unity of Africa" bear any resemblance? Otherwise these concepts are merely contesting concepts and are therefore mutually exclusive. While such a comparative study sounds attractive, I will nevertheless, in this study, focus on the African Renaissance. Any further reference to the "Unity of Africa" in this study should be viewed as complementary to the main study on the African Renaissance. The reason is that at the heart of this study are issues of life and death that challenge Africa as a continent to make an indelible mark in its internal and external affairs, in the face of world communities, that prod Africa to change its acquired gloomy image of a "dark continent".

This study is conducted at the beginning of a new millennium. Africa has a newly born democracy at its most southern tip, namely, the Republic of South Africa. In the year 2000 CE, former-President Thabo Mbeki sought to turn the world's perception of Africa to the better, by placing the challenge at the doorstep of the international community, demanding the right to host the Olympics, Soccer World Cup, and other world events<sup>5</sup>, on the surmise that Africa is both capable and ready. These claims, despite skepticism from mostly non-African prophets of doom, have been answered with South Africa winning the bid to host the most prominent event on the international scene, namely, the FIFA (Federation of International Football Association) Soccer World Cup in the year 2010 and subsequently the Confederation cup in 2009. This was probably a test case and readiness exercise. The acid test, however, and therefore the mettle to prove credibility and integrity, is whether Africa can by all standards host a successful international tournament of great magnitude. As a result, I need to investigate the extent to which the call for African Renaissance is responsible for the manner in which the proponents of game-readiness have staged an upsurge of claims of maturity. I should not assume that people are naive to think of soccer tournament as mere 'ball-game', but to recognise numerous challenges it poses to the host country. These challenges include highly involved preparations that include, among others, hospitality, infrastructure, communications

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*United States of Africa*, Pretoria: [s.n.].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. This included, on the religious front, the call for an African pope in the past Roman Catholic Church's election of the Pope, which eventually fell on Pope Benedict XVI on 19/04/2005.

and security<sup>6</sup>, which when considered in the light of simmering deadly conflicts that have dogged international stability provide a real test.

Hosting a successful soccer world cup tournament is but only one area in which Africa can be capped as the 'tried-and-tested'. This study needs to go beyond that. Therefore, to develop this study in a manner that will shed light on the various aspects of the subject in question, several key research issues should be put in place and appropriated. As standard procedure for the nature of such a study, I need to answer the following research cues as part of the introductory chapter: 1) the Statement of the Problem, 2) the Research Question, 3) the Relevance of the Study, 4) the Timing of the Study, 5) The Research Method, 6) Terminology, concepts and conceptual scope of research, 7) Personal stance, and 8) The structure of Chapters.

With these introductory words, I have outlined issues around the topic and move on now to delve critically into the subject matter. In the next paragraph I discuss "the statement of the problem".

## **1.2 The statement of the problem**

The problem formulation towards this study should appear clearer against a two-factored backdrop, namely, the European Renaissance and the idealism upon which the African Renaissance is fostered. Firstly, the European Renaissance is an achieved piece of history with many iconic landmarks which have served to inspire secondary similar movements in many parts of the world. This obviously creates a problem for the African dream in that the African Renaissance being an anachronic creation is in essence a 'product' in the making. Secondly, African Renaissance's driving force lies in the 'glorious' history of ancient kingdoms and the economic splendour discovered in monuments and ruins across the African continent. It is these

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<sup>6</sup> Conflicts, for example, that involve the US and its alliances, despite the incumbent President Obama's initial soft foreign policy, do not cease to pose a threat to any international show piece.



illustrious accounts of the past that proponents of the African Renaissance cast forward as mirages towards which all efforts of a renaissance are concentrated. This great history serves as an inspiration for success and a desire even to supersede its glory. With this in mind I wish to state that the prospect of achieving the rebirth of Africa has very huge odds stacked against it.

In and around 1960, many African states were declared independent by their colonial counterparts. However, soon many of these states gradually faced a downswing in fortunes, especially in economic and political terms. Africa has since then been increasingly challenged to develop itself and make a clear, radical turnabout from its “dark” history that has been besieged, at the political front, by dictatorship, wars, corruption and intransigence; on the health front, by an assortment of diseases, especially, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Malaria, TB; on the economic front, huge debt to the world’s financial institutions, including International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, making her vulnerable to hunger, poverty and abject destitute; on the educational front, by a high rate of illiteracy; and also on many other fronts with distressing subsequent conditions.

While this is sad, it is not all doom and gloom that inspire the dream of an African Renaissance. There are also positive pointers for this dream. The new sense of optimism which arose on the continent as a result of the liberation of Namibia in 1989 and democratic elections in Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania early in the 1990s are some of the events to be considered. Observers even began referring to a “Second Decade of Independence”, which culminated in the democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. Against this backdrop former-President Thabo Mbeki took up the call for an African Renaissance, and it looked as though the established attitude of Afro-pessimism in so many Western countries could be turned around. Many politicians and academics took the call for an African Renaissance seriously, and began to analyse it. Serious questions were posed on the relationship of an African Renaissance to the European Renaissance. Was the African Renaissance supposed to be an emulation of this event, or was it something completely new? What would be the driving force of the African Renaissance: an idealised interpretation of ancient

African history, a resurgence of political and economic power, a sense of African unity, or what? These are important issues which need to be addressed in response to any call towards which people are invited to participate with a view to a new awakening. But, this study is premised on a glaring omission apparent in speeches and structures of the African Renaissance, namely, the lack of a spiritual dimension. It is inconceivable for most Africans who are located within spiritual organisations, of which the church is noteworthy, that any act of giving 'birth' to such an important movement can take place without a spiritual dimension acting as a co-midwife. This study therefore hopes to highlight this indispensable need for spirituality to be reckoned with as an integral part of the African Renaissance movement.

As a background to the above-mentioned gap, this study seeks to determine the origins of the call for an African Renaissance. It hopes to find clarity on where the call originated, and also to create a better understanding of the forces driving the call (e.g. its relationship to the European Renaissance). It further hopes to establish the aim and goal of this call, what it seeks to establish and accomplish. Furthermore, it wants to analyse the forces which can or should drive and motivate such a far-reaching multifaceted movement.

To assist in this search for sound answers to the problems raised above, I need to formulate a Research Question that will help interrogate the various aspects of the problem and thus help engender answers pertinent to the nature of the problem identified. Therefore the next paragraph hopes to formulate such a question.

### **1.3 The research question<sup>7</sup>**

In my endeavour towards addressing the above-mentioned statement of the problem I will broach the following research questions and discuss them briefly:

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<sup>7</sup>The exercise of formulating the Research Question will be guided by the use of the Pastoral Cycle as described by Holland and Henriot (1983), especially as modified in the Missiology Discipline's DIS723-S, Tutorial Letter 101/2009 (Botha, *et al* 2009).

### 1.3.1 **On background issues**

*What background issues are underlying the cause for concern and therefore the call for African Renaissance?* My hypothesis is that there is an endemic thread that runs through the mind-set of most if not all proponents of African Renaissance that the stark realities of life and death facing Africans can no longer be ignored, romanticised or postponed. The question is: What are these realities? Can they be unflinchingly named without any form of disguise? To what extent are African leaders prepared to own up to these conditions of degradation? Subsequently, will the leaders be noble enough to make a commitment, or at least make a statement of intent, towards resolving the most deplorable conditions facing their countries and thus facing Africa, with a view to making an impact on the gravity of “the African problem”?

### 1.3.2 **On the current state of Africa**

*What is the current state of Africa? What efforts are in place to salvage Africa from further destruction?* My hypothesis is that to begin to do anything towards alleviating the stressful conditions of the continent, a proper study on the present conditions of the country needs to be done. This study should be systematic and should seek to provide a clear picture of what Africa looks like in terms of its various features. I will apply social analysis tools that I consider effective to can bring to surface the core issues underlying the state in which the continent finds itself.

### 1.3.3 **In retrospection of Africa’s heritage**

The basic assumption is that a “renaissance” presupposes a recreation or a restoration of a situation based on a given past with a view to a better future. Such a ‘past’ should have a profound heritage or should at least have a recognisable cultural history upon which the call for African Renaissance can be based. This then can give the movement enough inner resolve to cause it to happen. However, how helpful will this exercise be in the quest for renewal? My hypothesis is that in as much as the information about the glorious past of the continent is important, at least for historical purposes and other cultural heritage reasons, it means little to the child dying of hunger in draught-stricken wastelands of Africa, nor will it give hope to the fugitives of

war with death lingering over then like a dark cloud of doom. African Renaissance should expeditiously move to salvage the situation while there is still hope. It is clear that if African Renaissance should be a concept to be endeared and owned by Africans it should swiftly move to address the most basic and urgent issues facing the continent. Consequently, this study will further enquire into structures, operations, and concepts employed by agents of African Renaissance in the quest for a renewed Africa.

#### **1.3.4 Inquiring on the engagement with Africa's spirituality**

*What are the spiritual dimensions which can inspire African faith communities to engage with the African Renaissance?* My hypothesis is that Africa, with a very strong religious ancestry, has a deep religious and ecclesial background that has played and continues to play an important role on the continent. This religious life has found expression in the African Religions, Islamic and Christian faiths, albeit with all their contradictions and controversies. African Renaissance should, therefore, take into account this rich, religious heritage and find in it inherent helpful resources that speak directly to questions of rebirth and renewal. I advance further my hypothesis that, Christianity, with a strong teaching on rebirth and renewal is well poised to offer a truly holistic understanding and contribution that may undergird the renaissance movement in Africa.

#### **1.3.5 On where the African Renaissance program should begin**

Where can the starting point of important and far reaching programs of the African Renaissance be located? The place: my hypothesis is that South Africa, which is currently experiencing the birth pangs of a new democracy and also being the focal point for African development and renewal, should provide a case study from which implications of the African Renaissance can be studied and their proposal applied. My choice for South Africa is simply that it is my country of origin and current residence; its former president, Mr Mbeki, is an outspoken exponent of the African Renaissance

and its economic, socio-political profile both within and outside the continent has granted it credibility to can deal with issues renewal. The time is now; the *kairos*<sup>8</sup> has dawned upon us to respond positively to its prompting. South Africa cannot escape the limelight as ‘the hope’ for Africa. God has bestowed it with the grace of wealth (materially and otherwise) not enjoyed by many African states. Religion and the Church<sup>9</sup> in South Africa with its important role in the struggle for democracy should, in its own right, consider this as its ‘*kairos*’ too, and with challenge to engender conditions (especially spiritually) that are both conducive and enabling for anticipated rebirth. Lastly, ‘Theology’, in the hands of conscientious theologians, should step into the ‘labour ward’ and act as midwife at this opportune time of the African history.

### 1.3.6 Thesis question

What are the origins and context of the call for an African Renaissance? How can important issues be addressed? What is the role which Christian Missiology can play to make this a vision of hope and not a ‘dream deferred’? These questions encapsulate the research question as outlined above and will serve as compass by which I will navigate through the entirety of this study.

## 1.4 The relevance of the study

The concept of ‘African Renaissance’ is a political idiom of our day. Many African leaders who speak a language that is progressive in terms that are akin to forces of globalisation have used the term to portray a distinct feature and mindset that is found in current economic and socio-political posturing. On the

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<sup>8</sup>I am using *kairos* in the sense of the *Kairos Document* (KD) to mean an appointed time that spells a major change, especially to a socio-political dispensation. the *Kairos Document* was prophetic document drawn under the auspices of the Institute for Christian Theology (ICT) by Christian leaders to critique church, theology and politics in South Africa in 1985.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Church’ is a very problematic concept, as illustrated for example, in the *Kairos Document* and in recent events in Rwanda (cf. Par. 5.3.2, for related discussion).

one hand the challenges by the world community to Africa- particularly the west block- are that Africa must improve its social, political and economical lot. On the other hand, there is a demand by Africa to the world, especially on the claims of readiness to host various international activities, including, the claims to take intellectual leadership in various institutions of the world, are important elements that make such a study legitimate. The church as the salt of the earth in the nature of its making (a subject I discuss extensively in chapter 5) is required to be compassionate and prophetic about matters affecting humanity and the whole ecosystem. The Church is, for that reason, called to be vigilant and vocal against all forces of destruction. This study should be seen as another voice within the body of Christ to make a contribution to bear on all other efforts toward delivering a resilient 'baby' on the global scene. This study should truly emphasise the need and importance to engage all the forces of change to make the call for African Renaissance as hopeful and as loud and clear as possible from the perspective of a faith community.

## **1.5 The Timing of the Study**

The study on the African Renaissance as a concept and movement has proved to be interesting. The reason is that while I have presented my thesis in terms of the past, the reality is that many events and debates are on-going and inconclusive. This then made this study difficult, on the one hand, and also frustrating, on the other. It was difficult in that there were and there continue to be many voices of contestation. For example, several authors of Afro-pessimism orientation (cf. Maundeni 2004 and Ernst 2002) would want people to believe that Africa is a failure and has no better future. On the other hand, there are also voices of hope that envisage a successful continent. The study was equally frustrating in that many events written about were 'transitory'. For instance, since I began with the study several presidents of African states about whom I have written rose to power, occupied certain positions of influence but have in due course left those position. Certain events about which I have presented arguments have come and gone. As I was concluding this study the FIFA

Soccer World Cup bid which I had initially presented as a possibility, was won by South Africa; I had argued that its successful staging would prove Africa's mettle as force to be reckoned with. And as I was writing the concluding chapter of this study the first matches of the tournament had already started. The frustration I have always had was the ability to go back to claims I had made on specific persons, events and statistics, and to put them in correct fact and time references. I therefore submit that even as the study lands in the hands of subsequent readers and critics, some issues would be, as matter of fact, outdated.

## 1.6 Research method

### 1.6.1 Sources:

This study approached the topic from cardinal points in order to cover crucial areas of concern. To that effect, pockets of literature with generic/specific emphases were studied:

- 1.6.1.1 *The study has accumulated a set of literature from the political leaders, especially former-President T Mbeki on "African Renaissance".*
- 1.6.1.2 *A set of literature derived from the secular non-political sources. Of special interest were those dealing with economic issues seeking to address poverty on the continent.*
- 1.6.1.3 *A set of literature which the study has used to determine the Missiological dimension of the debate, the role of the church and other faiths. These included theological books and articles which have reflected on these topics. A special interest was literature written by Africans and those born out of an African experience.*
- 1.6.1.4 *Other sources included unorthodox references such as magazines, newspapers, encyclopaedia and popular websites. I am aware of the reservation expressed against online sources, especially for concerns of accuracy and volatility of information. (cf. Ward 2009)<sup>10</sup>. As indicated above*

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<sup>10</sup> WARD, T.P. 2009. *Is Wikipedia a reliable research tool? Site's Errors Comparable to Britannica* ( <http://writingreports.suite101.com/article.cfm> accessed 17/06/2010).

*the African Renaissance debate is a 'work in progress'. Many current important issues have not as yet been translated to research articles or books. Notwithstanding the validity of the debate, I have however, taken care to mitigate against the risk by drawing from those sources that in my judgment are substantive and defensible, in terms of their secondary sources and in applying 'sensemaking theory'<sup>11</sup> to derive fact from fiction in a source of information or account of events.*

## **1.7 Terminology, concepts and conceptual scope of research**

Definition of important terms and concepts relevant to the topic will be done. Where necessary the etymology of these terms/concepts will be considered. A preliminary list of important terms and concepts include the following:

Africanisation, Renaissance, New World Order, *Ubuntu*, Moral Regeneration, Nepad (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and globalisation. Other related terms will be taken into account in relevant sections of the discussions.

The study of this nature encompasses diverse areas of human activity. Certain areas are very critical for quality of life and its sustainability. Off-hand I have considered important to discuss the following areas as necessary for an integrated view of categories of life's supporting systems on the continent. These include:

- *Political Economy*: This will explore a range of relationships including individuals, societies, markets and states in order to make sense of how various systems of human institutions and corporate bodies and states have direct bearing on the life of the people. In this area of research issues of culture, health (healing), education (literacy), governance (role of authorities, autocracy, democracy, etc.), morality and human behaviour (crime, moral regeneration, *Ubuntu*, and development projects) will receive attention.

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<sup>11</sup> VAN NIEKERK, E. nd. *The wholesome and dynamic sense making approaches in the transfer of doctrines and theories of faith*; see also [/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking).



- *The Church-Religion*: Faith institutions as beacons of hope, advocacy for life and quality of life, prophetic responsibility as well as controversial role of religion in different forms such as in evangelisation, proselytisation, ‘holy wars’ and sacrifices, will add to the multifaceted view of life and its complexities on the continent.
- *Current Theologies/Theories*: Since this is not only a study in social sciences, but also in theology, discussions on a possible range of topics touching on Genitive theologies (Theologies of liberation, Reconstruction, etc.) Africanisation, Feminism/Womanism, Indigenisation and Inculturation, to name just a few, should help create an understanding of how Christian faith plays an integral part in influencing life patterns on the continent in apposite way.

## **1.8 Personal stance**

I am an African. I am a South African. I cherish a better future for Africa, especially South Africa my country of birth. I am a Christian. I am of a view that it is not God’s plan that Africa is destined to a life of servitude and misery. I, therefore, see beyond the horizons of gloom and doom, beyond the evils of our time, the ravaging epidemics, and destitute conditions, beyond both natural and human-made calamities facing Africa. The calls by visionaries, such as former President Thabo Mbeki, throw a ray of hope and therefore a line of survival upon which Africans can hang and pull themselves out of the condemnation be it externally imposed or self-imposed. I undertake this study as an affected person and as part of those traversing, in faith, a journey towards a new future where all may share in the beauty and glory of a “reborn” Africa.

I undertake this study as a minister of the Word, as a theologian and as a simple believer. In my hope for better things I have found solace in a faith that holds on to the “yet unseen”. Even in my pragmatic tendencies, I nevertheless believe that the destiny of nations is in the hands of the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God, who was revealed in Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom all things in the universe, both seen and unseen, are reconciled (Col.1:15-

20). It is his Word that declares that as human beings we propose, but he alone disposes. Within the framework of my Missiological orientation I believe that I have a contribution to make. Depending on the result of my study, I will assume a critical prophetic stance that will point out to the errors and evils of my ancestors and my contemporaries. Otherwise I hope to stand in the “open market” and herald approvingly of socio-political and other phenomenal events that purport to improve the lot of our people.

In my hope, I often suffer anguish as I continue to be torn between hope and despair. I am not oblivious of the many calls and movements in African history in the past which seemed to promise much yet in the end delivered little. The challenge I have is to issue a sustainable vision of hope based on an honest analysis of the context. Otherwise, the call for the African Renaissance may just become yet another dream deferred.

## **1.9 The structure of chapters**

In order to carry out the objectives of this study I have fashioned my discussion on the basis of two domains. The first domain deals with an empirical study on Africa in relation to the African Renaissance and is covered in Chapters Two to Four. The second domain is both constructive (develops solutions to a problem) and dialectic (exploratory and seeks new understanding) and deals with Missiological conceptualisation of ‘renaissance’ and Missionary praxis in relation to the African Renaissance, and is covered in Chapter Five to Six. Chapter 7 is the conclusion and is retrospective as well as prospective.

An overview of each chapter is as follows:

- Chapter 2: In order to understand the call for an African Renaissance, key issues that pertain to its name and identity are discussed. Both

human and non-human conditions that define the state of the continent at the beginning of this 21<sup>st</sup> Century are given, analysed and interpreted;

- Chapter 3 builds on the background given in the previous chapter by discussing African Renaissance visionaries and proponents of change in terms of their ideals and the negative forces that challenge their dreams. These negativities are based on history, tangible obstacles and the inevitable fact of passage or succession;
- Chapter 4 focuses on how the African Renaissance can be achieved by looking at important role players, structures and organisations, as well as, motivators that should enhance the movement's resolve to succeed;
- Chapter 5 introduces Missiology as a neglected dimension in the African Renaissance debate. It challenges participants of the renaissance movement by pointing to the undeniable fact of Africa's spirituality and uses that as a point of departure in introducing *rebirth* as Missiology's answer to the economic and political *renaissance's* impasse.
- Chapter 6 advances further the missiological dimension by introducing a cutting edge cycle of missionary praxis which is a powerful tool that has the potential to impact the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Chapter 7 concludes with a brief note on the whole debate and holds for the future of the African Renaissance in concord with Missiology.

In the next section, Chapter 2, I begin the African Renaissance and Missiology discourse by discussing the state of Africa at the beginning of this century.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2 AFRICA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the state of Africa at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This discussion is undertaken against the backdrop of important events preceding and pre-empting the current era. While the focus is on the current events inferences to the past will help elucidate these events and place them in relevant contexts. In presenting an overview of the African continent, there are however forefront ideological questions that need to be clarified first. One of them relates to the identity of the continent in terms of inclusive descriptions. As a foregoing viewpoint, I need to state that Africa is a very heterogeneous continent. There is North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa; there is West Africa and East Africa; there is Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa; and there is Christian Africa and Muslim Africa. I therefore want to state that when I write about Africa in this thesis, I am not oblivious to the fact that Africa is not a homogenous entity. Yet there are enough similarities to be able to write about “Africa” as others write about “Europe” or “Asia”.

#### 2.2 Africa—the quest for identity

Africa as a subject for discussion is multifaceted. Some of the many forms such a discussion could take include the name (its origins, development and use), the geography, the culture, the political economy, religious relations with other continents, etc. These ‘forms’ serve not only as entry points into the subject, but also serve as the window through which Africa can be better known and characterised. My focus under this heading is twofold:

Firstly, I discuss the critical questions, namely, *What Africa?* (This question refers to the debate on the correct name of or for the continent), and *Which Africa?* (This question is about the identity of Africa and seeks to establish whether there can be a talk of one Africa that is free from any ambiguities).

Secondly, by placing Africa within the African Renaissance debate, it is important to try to make out what the exponents of the African Renaissance in their speeches and writings mean by 'Africa'. Even so, how different are these conceptions of Africa from those who call for the unity of Africa.

### **2.3 What Africa? — The name is problem *specific*.**

Miller (1985:6) makes a bold claim that matters of name about Africa are highly limited until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In most cases these texts are repetitions by authors, what they phrase as “cannibalistic, plagiarizing intertextuality” (Miller1985:6). Even so the quality of their assertions can be reduced mostly to “hearsay” rather than “direct evidence”. Recent and much clearer descriptions of the continent come from explorers who, nevertheless, filled the limitations of their claims with descriptions such as *terra incognita*<sup>12</sup> (i.e. unknown and unexplored region) (Miller1985:6).

A few significant names have been used in labelling African and/or parts thereof. Historically, these names have had fluid applications. I will take Miller's sample of these names (viz. Ethiopia, Africa, Niger, Sudan, Nigritia and Libya) and limit my research thereby. In exploring these names will inquire into their origins, in terms of use and etymology, attach any importance to their meaning, and then apply the findings to my quest for an African Renaissance name preview. As a premonition I draw on the importance of names and their significance, especially as given by outsiders or observers (cf. Miller 1985:8-9 on significance of 'naming').

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. Initial map on Africa, e.g. Ptolemy's geographical version of the south of Africa and Sebastian Münster's 1540AD map of Africa confirm this notion. ([en.wikipedia.org/cosmographia](http://en.wikipedia.org/cosmographia) accessed 04/07/09).

- Ethiopia

Ethiopia (language origin: Greek): According to Miller (1985:8), it is the oldest Western name given to the continent of Africa. Already as early as 1540 BCE Ptolemy labelled the whole continent “Aethiopia”. Similarly, “Africa” referred to a region around Carthage (Miller 1985:8). In its etymology “Ethiopia” according to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* comes from the Greek word, α\_θειν (athein), “to burn” + \_ψ, “face”, meaning “burnt-face”. From this inference the understanding of Black Africans can be concluded (Miller 1985:8). Miller (1985:8) develops this theory further by referring to a Fitzgerald translation of “Ethiopians” namely, “the sun-burnt faces”. He argues that it could only be a person of a lighter skin complexion who could give such a name to the ‘other’. In the rise of African Initiated Churches (AICs) this name in the Bible was understood by AICs as a reference to Africa. Within the AICs therefore this inspired an exclusive Black appeal to the verse to mean a definite invocation to Africans by God to take the matter of conversion, inculturation and church growth seriously and make it an African enterprise (cf. Pheko 1999).

- Niger

Recent scholars claim that originally the name “Niger”, meaning ‘black’, was *Nigeir* which means ‘river’. This misreading came about as a result of a Latin-based European language. Miller (1985) argues that this is made clear in reading Ptolemy’s use of the words (*Geir* and *Nigeir*) that they were not proper names but generic words for river.<sup>13</sup>

- Sudan

The word “Sudan”, on record, has been in use well before the eight century CE designating “everything south of the Mediterranean littoral and north of the Congo Basin” (Miller 1985:9). In a similar connotation as for ‘Ethiopia’ in Greek, ‘Sudan’,

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<sup>13</sup>For further reading on *Niger*, see Meek, C.K. 1960. The Niger and the classics: The history of the name, *Journal of African History*, 1:1.

which means 'blacks' in Arabic, was used by a 'white' observer, in this case a Moslem.<sup>14</sup>

- 'Africa'

The preceding discourses are already an insinuation of probable meanings for the name of the continent under the name 'Africa'. However, there is even greater uncertainty of the probable meaning in respect of this name. Miller concedes that 'Africa' was a name given by Carthaginians on interrogation by Romans (Miller 1985:10). However, in its original usage it referred only to the region around Carthage, but later adopted a dual designation, that of "a part of whole or whole of a part (Miller 1985:10). Miller (1985) probing further arrived at 10 hypotheses of what "Africa" could mean:

- Name of a tribe, living around Carthage, probably of Punic-Semitic origin, signifying, "The Wanderers";
- "South Land";
- "Colony": a translation of "Afrigah", a word of ancient Phoenician origin;
- "Dust": derived from "Aphar" in Hebrew;
- "Without cold" a composite name from two Greek components, 'α' + 'φρικη';
- "De Afer" a conqueror of Africa naming it after himself, or "Affrick" of "Afer" (the Sonne of *Hercules* the Libyan.
- "Sunny" from Latin "aprica"
- "Ear of corn" for Arabic word 'phérick'
- "It has separated" for "Faraca" (the root of "Ifrichia") in Arabic.

Miller (1985:12) classifies the suggested names under three categories upon which he draws conclusions in terms of their use and meaning: 1) The first group are phonologically linked to Africa (phérick, faraca, aphrika, aprica) and, with exception of Afer which has a political history of conquest, their meaning are determined in

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<sup>14</sup> Miller (1985:10) tells about Ibn Battuta (1307-77), the Moslem traveler-writer, on Sudanese episode, "The pagans hadn't eaten him [a Moslem] solely because of his white color. They say that eating a White man is unsafe because he isn't ripe; according to them, only Black man is ripe".

accordance with the author's ideas. 2) The second group of words (dusty, sunny, without cold, southern), like similar etymologies, serve oppositional function between two specific points of reference. Miller regards such a situation as another "observer-outsider" imposition of a name. 3) The third and last group of names (colony, Afer, it has separated) belong to stories of "exile and subjugation". To these words Miller (1985:14) attaches clear historical significance that represents "realism and allegorism".

Miller's research on the name 'Africa' serves mainly to satisfy some curiosity about the origins of the name 'Africa' but also to establish whether it has significance to the state of affairs of the continent. Two broad assumptions can be made. Firstly, the 'outsider' problem has always troubled the minds of Africans and this has been evident with names of several states of Africa after independence. If the new names have demonstrated the lingering quest for identity, then the call for an African Renaissance may therefore express a longing to come up with a truly African 'colouring in' of the desired name. Secondly, in several spirituality and biblical studies it has been argued that certain names are based on 'curse pronouncements' or 'biblical prophecies of doom' and that affected places and persons may not recover for as long as the particular name, curse or prophetic pronouncement stands. In such cases, a Missiological intercession would then have to help seek appropriate spiritual interventions that may bring about lasting solutions. This does not seem to be the case in respect of Africa. I thus want to hold that the fate of Africa does not lie in its name but elsewhere. As a result, this study will proceed to establish an understanding of Africa's position at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by looking at the impact of the colonial era onto the current state of affairs.

## **2.4 The Colonial era**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa was composed of 53 different states (Hugo & Maloka 2004:172) or 54 (Wikipedia/Economy of Africa 2009). The origins of many of Africa states, especially in the north, date back many centuries before the Christian



era. It is not the purpose of this study to discuss this history, but to focus on the current state of affairs as seen at beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. A brief background, though, of the origins of the African states is necessary in order to shed light on the debate consequent to cardinal issues relevant to the rebirth of Africa. Even here, attention will mostly be given to those forces that still bear heavily on modern Africa, especially the colonial powers. This background concerns itself to a large extent with the colonial period because of the legacy and the shackles from which the continent is still battling to set itself free from, in order to realise a new dawn. In discussing the problem of colonisation I will discuss North Africa, Sahara and Sudan as case studies so that it will be possible to appreciate the gravity of colonisation in Africa.

#### 2.4.1 **North Africa**

A brief look at known records of Africa reveals that “the continent’s known history begins with the gradual development of Egyptian civilisation in North Africa” (Goetz 1988:77). The invasion of North Africa by external forces took place over several periods. These forces included Phoenicians who established the earliest settlements and the Greeks, more than 600 years BCE. Later, from around 146BCE the Romans took over power, followed by the Vandals (429CE), the Byzantines (533CE), the Muslims (670CE), the Berber dynasties (11<sup>th</sup> Century), the Ottoman Turks (1514 CE), the Sharifian Morocco (1570's) and the Europeans (e.g. the French occupation of Algiers in 1830). All these were precursors to the European partition of all Africa (Goetz 1988:78).

Each of these colonial powers were characterised by their selfish interests. For instance, the Phoenicians and the Greeks had as their primary interest maritime trade (Fage 2002:183-184). The same can be said of the Romans and Byzantines, who though oppressive but brought with them “economic & artistic revival”, the Muslim era can be described as turbulent period, docketed by depressing recital of wars, rebellions, misgovernment, and anarchy, while Turks were interested solely in piracy and the French’s (Europe) intention was to stamp out piracy (Goetz 1988:77,78).

Further down on the inland side different political developments unfolded. Sahara and Sudan will give a picture of the kind of political dynamics at play on the inland.

#### 2.4.2 The case of Sahara and Sudan <sup>15</sup>

The two areas, Sahara and Sudan, lie between 7 and 17 degrees north of the Equator, with the Sahara Desert to the north and the Tropical forest in the south. Here, the rather isolated blacks developed slowly under the commercial and colonial influence of Egypt especially around the upper Nile. A Sudanese kingdom of Cush (Kush) was by the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE strong enough even to conquer Egypt and ruled it until expelled by the Assyrians in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. In this noteworthy region was the Kingdom of Ghana, renowned as “the land of gold” because it traded in gold products with North Africa and salt trade from the Sahara by the Berber tribes. Several incursions by Muslim forces gradually crippled both the political cohesion and commercial prestige of the Kingdom of Ghana (Goetz 1988:79). A much stronger political and commercial power was the Mali Empire, from c.1240, whose control stretched over a vast area towards the south. This also deteriorated because of succession struggles among its rulers. Other surrounding centres of power were Gao, Timbuktu, Jenne, Songhai, Bornu and Hausa. At some point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the introduction of foreigners in the form of the French along the Senegal River and the British in the Gold Coast-Nigeria, the Egyptians to the Nilotic Sudan and Muslims in Sudan brought whole change and sway of power in this region. The outstanding features of these infiltrations can be captured in the following words:

These movements naturally came into collision with the advancing power of the British and the French, whose explorers from about 1788 had been penetrating the Sudan and stimulating their countries’ economic ambitions...By the 1890s the French were eroding the hinterland of British trade from the Gold Coast and

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<sup>15</sup>The Arabic words: *sahrā* means “the waste land” and *bilād as-sūdān* means “land of the black peoples” (Goetz 1988:78).

lower Nigeria and threatening the Upper Nile, vital to British interests in Egypt and Uganda (Goetz 1988:80).

The preceding scenarios somehow model other events of power, invasion, conquest, expansion and control in Africa, with trade as an important and central commodity in these power plays. In sequence of incursion for trade control, especially within intent to outflank the trans-Saharan trade of the North Africans, the Portuguese were the first to reach the Senegal River by sea in 1445. They monopolised this trade encounter with North Africa until the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it was broken by the Dutch. The Portuguese however, exploited their advantaged hold to these regions, in particular the lower Congo and the hinterland of Mozambique, to slave trade. It was the explorations of men like Karl Mauch, Thomas Baines, Frederick Selous (from 1860) and especially the great explorations (1853-73) of David Livingstone, for missionary activity, and the transcontinental expedition (1874-77) of Henry Morton Stanley that exposed these evil acts.

In the process of the French created colonies of their own, viz., Senegal, Mauritania, French Sudan, Upper Volta, Niger, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Dahomey—these became the Federation of French West Africa; Germany acquired Togo and Kamerun, the Great Britain acquired Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria (Davidson 1991:291; Goetz 1988:82).

A conclusion can thus be arrived at with regard to these developments toward the European colonial takeover of Africa and the resultant picture of this expropriation:

- 1) The trade and commercial interests were at the heart of European scramble for Africa;
- 2) Trade in slaves formed a repugnant wing of this Africa enterprise;
- 3) Exploitation by various colonial forces saw riches expropriated out of Africa to enrich European states and their conglomerates;
- 4) Military power was applied to influence, take control and usurp land from Africans;
- 5) Institution of governance modelled according to European concepts of rule, as well as mis-governance where individual commanders were left to their own devices replaced African forms of socio-political ordering of communities;
- 6) Complementary tracks of this invasion were the

missionary and exploration expeditions which collaborated in some measure with military invasions; 7) Humanitarian intrusion simultaneously took place with other incursions (e.g. by the British) in order to stop slave trade.

These events explain the change of scene on the African landscape in terms of the existence of identity and existence of African nations. This integration of selfhood would have lasting effect in terms of disorientation of African systems of governance and cultural homogeneity. Part of this disorientation can be seen in how colonialism fathomed nation states in Africa. I discuss this aspect next as an important lead to the understanding of Africa at the beginning of this century.

### 2.4.3 Colonialism and nation states

In the previous paragraph I have explained how colonial powers met to allocate themselves parts of Africa. There were definite consequences to this. The colonial era brought with it states without which, it has been observed, no successful nations can be fashioned (Makgoba 1999:257). However, the colonial models of governance at worst “destabilised ... societies, and weakened their dynamism and capacity for resistance and renewal by imposing structures, rules and mechanisms of functioning which were modelled on the Western one” Guèye (in Makgoba 1999:257). A list of misfits resulting from depraved application of Western forms of governance, according to Guèye includes: 1) destruction of indigenous system of social and political relations; 2) adverse effect on the viability of solidity and subsidiary in the social structures; 3) erosion of the collective efforts of the society towards meeting its basic needs; 4) advance of corruption, incompetence, and unaccountability; 5) facilitation of marginalisation of the less privileged; 6) arrogation of political instruments to entrench monopoly of privileges; 7) progressive disengagement of the state from social and cultural sectors; 8) subsequent collapse of services such as education, health, housing, transportation; and 9) devaluation of life, property and freedom.

It can, therefore, be said that when value systems degenerate exceedingly, it is inconceivable that with only a few exceptions the countries of Africa rapidly turned to military dictatorships or other forms of centralised authoritarian rule (Davidson 1989: 203-207; cf. Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation\_of\_Africa 2009). This problem was aggravated by the poor manner in which decolonisation processes took place and the standoff during the Cold War which saw superpowers creating divisions and political alignments with African rulers who desired their support (Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation of Africa 2009).

#### 2.4.4 The lasting legacy of colonialism

The effect of the colonization of Africa in terms of its advantages and disadvantages is a subject of great debate. Africa reached its greatest relative economic wealth in the years just prior to decolonization. Since then many countries have yet to return to the levels of wealth they reached in the 1960s. Some see this as evidence that colonisation helped to uplift local economies, while others argue that colonialism left a devastating mark on African economies. To get a sense of this debate a brief look at the economic situation of some African countries during the colonial period and the impact of colonial influence on them should help illustrate this point. I will then conclude with a general overview on the impact of colonialism in Africa.

To achieve the relative wealth of the colonial period, imperial overseers geared the economies of Africa towards exporting raw materials. Thus Egypt became a vast producer of cotton, Ruanda-Urundi almost completely dedicated to growing coffee, and Upper Volta to the production of palm oil, which was for use by the colonial country. The practice of basing an entire nation's wealth on one commodity, however good it seemed at the beginning, it in later years proved to have incapacitating effects. These monocultures left national economies extremely vulnerable to price swings, making economic planning difficult. It is the opinion of some writers, such as Walter Rodney (in Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation of Africa)<sup>16</sup> that largely, colonial

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<sup>16</sup> He wrote a very influential book entitled, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*.

policies are directly responsible for many of Africa's modern problems. Other post-colonial scholars, most notably Frantz Fanon ([Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation\\_of\\_Africa](#); cf. Makgoba 1999), have argued that the true effects of colonialism are psychological and that domination by a foreign power creates a lasting sense of inferiority and subjugation that creates a barrier to growth and innovation.

In some cases, European rule played a protectorate role but in those areas that became actual colonies one of the first acts was to ensure that all the top members of society were Europeans with immense privileges; this not only meant the rulers but also the lawyers, doctors, and academics. In areas of Africa that had a significant educated native population, such as the Gold Coast and the Maghreb, the educated were looked upon with great suspicion by the colonial rulers as they were seen as nationalists and anti-imperialists. Many colonial regimes therefore did not put money or effort into creating local elite. While they funded education, this was almost entirely primary education that taught basic skills such as literacy. Thus upon independence many African states saw an exodus of the European administrators and consequently lacked individuals with the training or education to operate the government they had inherited. For instance, the massive area of French Equatorial Africa was divided into four independent nations, but was home to only five locals who were university graduates. ([Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation\\_of\\_Africa](#))

Another lasting legacy of colonisation is that Africa was embroiled in the Cold War. The countries of the Western and Eastern blocs used foreign aid money as leverage to lure African countries into their camps. This foreign aid had a questionable effect on development, because large amounts of it were tied to the purchase of military weapons. The donor countries turned a blind eye to corruption and the misappropriation of the funds. Hence corruption became endemic. Even worse, the cold war led to proxy conflicts in Africa as both blocs would fund and assist any rebellious or sectarian groups in a nation under the control of the opposing bloc.

With the end of the Cold War almost all developed countries drastically slashed foreign aid spending, in so much that one would expect a reduction in armed conflicts. However, violence continued unabated. Civil wars raged throughout the

Great Lakes region, Somalia, Sudan, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Guinea-Bissau. Cross border wars have preoccupied the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours (see footnote Wikipedia/Colonialism/Colonisation\_of\_Africa/ the First and Second Congo Wars) and war also broke out between Ethiopia and its former province Eritrea. These entire standoffs have had obvious and definite adverse socio-economic implications. (cf. Makgoba 1999). It cannot be disputed that in many of these problems, from economic to military turmoil, there has been a hand of colonial interest, such that even when the colonial powers appeared to have withdrawn the problems continued on the momentum already gained.

#### **2.4.5 Sustenance to colonial power and influence through foreign trade**

Dependency theory (Wikipedia/Economy\_of\_Africa/Foreign trade) asserts that the wealth and prosperity of the "core" nations of Europe, North America and East Asia is dependent upon the poverty of the rest of the world, including Africa. This theory originated in the 1950s and 1960s as a rationalization for the failure of developmental policies in South America and Africa. Unlike classical Marxism, in which the poor of every nation are united (in theory), dependency theorists thus believe that poorer regions must break their trading ties with the developed world in order to prosper. Many economists have lambasted this theory for its inherent weaknesses (Wikipedia/Economy\_of\_Africa/Foreign trade).

A less radical approach to foreign trade is the assumption that the protection of certain economic sectors in developed countries hampers Africa's growth. One of the most important of these protected industries is the agricultural sector. Many developing countries harvest large quantities of agricultural produce at low cost, yet generally do not export as much of these as would be expected. Abundant farm subsidies and high import tariffs in the developed world, most notably in Japan, the European Union, and the United States are generally thought to be the cause.

## 2.5 Decolonisation of Africa

The decolonisation of Africa was a process in which the European colonial powers relinquished control over countries under their rule. This took place mainly after World War II. Most of Africa had been colonised during the so-called Scramble for Africa in the midst of the New Imperialism period, in the second half of the nineteenth century. National liberation movements began to become really influential after World War I. The Algerian War of Independence (1954-62) as well as the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-74) was the most violent outbursts. In 1958, the French Union became the French Community, with the notable exception of Guinea whom it decided its independence by referendum. Two years later, all of the French African colonies became independent. The decolonization process, it is argued, was completed with the democratic elections of South Africa in 1994. Many African leaders had maintained that Africa would not be free until South Africa is free. Critics argue though, that the process of decolonisation has yet to be completed, because as they argue, colonialism is still being carried out under different forms and shades, such as neo-colonialism. One would expect the benefits of colonial subjects too great to surrender. Certainly there were reasons that led to colonial powers to release states their held as their subjects.

African soldiers who were shipped abroad during the World War I and World War II, as well as Africans who studied abroad gained increased awareness about the nature of the world and contemporary international opinions. The British had convinced the Africans they were fighting against the aggression of fascism for the sake of democracy. This inspired, in return, Africans to also expect some form of independence and increased standards of living.

African leaders too, realised that Africa was key to winning the World War II. This captured the mind of some major nationalist leaders including Kenyatta (Kenya), Nkrumah (Gold Coast, Ghana), Senghor (Senegal), and Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire). From the African viewpoint, the colonies were helping their colonial masters



fight against an unknown enemy without any mention of independence. Some leaders like Mr Vorster and others of South Africa supported Hitler while most French colonial governors showed loyalty to the Vichy government until 1943. German wartime propaganda had a part in this defiance of British rule. Because Japan had begun its imperial quest in the Far East, there was a shortage of raw materials such as rubber and various minerals. Africa was then forced to compensate for this shortage and greatly benefitted from this change. Another key problem the Europeans had were U-boats patrolling the Atlantic Ocean. This reduced the amount of raw materials being transported to Europe and prompted the creation of local industries in Africa. Local industries in turn caused the creations of new towns and existing towns to double in size. As the urban community and industry grew in size so did trade unions. In addition to trade unions, urbanisation brought about increased literacy, a plus towards independence because this allowed for mass spreading for pro-independence newspapers. All these factors combined to bolster the spirit of nationalism and the quest for independence.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all of Africa had been decolonised. Indeed, whereas the 1960's had been described as Africa's first decade of independence, the 1990's were described as Africa's second decade of independence in the light of democratic, multiparty elections in Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa. A decolonised Africa was not free of problems, however. This is what I want to describe in the next section.

## **2.6 National life in Africa at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century**

At the beginning of this century I need to present the conditions of national states in order to assess prospects of success towards a continental rebirth. My point of departure is that I am not dealing with a monolithic decolonised Africa, but extremely heterogeneous states. There are nevertheless similarities and commonalities in certain important dimensions of national life in Africa. Through these dimensions I want to explore the transversality of states in terms of, among others, economic,

cultural, social and political influence and cooperation. I pick a few of the critical dimensions to illustrate my point, and economy is one such important dimension.

### 2.6.1 Political economy

As is the case throughout the world, economic interests are central in all political developments of the continent from the colonial period through decolonisation up to and with the independence era. In this paragraph I aim to highlight the importance of economic viability without which Africa cannot realise even its minimum dreams. The quest for economic independence from external control has led to the talk of the “Second Independence”. I may ask, “What are the prospects of a better life fifty years after Africa’s independence? Is there any shred of hope of hope?”

To provide answers to this important question, an overall view of the economy of Africa as of the year 2003, should serve as my starting point and help shed light on the economic state of the continent:

Population	887 million (14%)
GDP (PPP)	US\$1.635 trillion
GDP (Currency)	\$558 billion
GDP/capita (PPP)	\$1,968
GDP/capita (Currency)	\$671
Annual growth in per capita GDP	0.74% (1999-2002)
Income of top 10%	44.7%
Millionaires	0.1 Million (0.01%)
Population living under \$1 per day:	36.2 %
External debt as a percent of GDP	60.7% (1998)

External debt payment as a percent of GDP	4.2%
Foreign aid revenue as a percent of GDP	3.2% (2001)
Estimated female income	51.8% of male
Numbers from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and African Development Bank (AfDB). Most numbers exclude some countries for lack of information. Since these tend to be the poorest nations, these numbers tend to have an upwards bias. Numbers are mostly from 2002	

Africa is by far the world's poorest of all continents. It is on the average poorer than it was 25 years ago. In terms of ranking in the global context, the United Nations' Human Development Report 2003 of 175 countries found that positions 151 (Gambia) to 175 (Sierra Leone) were occupied entirely by African nations. In contrast to rapid growth in China and India, and moderate growth in South America, which has lifted millions beyond subsistence living, Africa has stagnated. It has even retrogressed in terms of foreign trade, investment and per capita income. This state of poverty has widespread effects, including low life expectancy, violence, and instability. The state of the economy cannot be divorced from the political forces. A general assumption is that it is not so much the state of the economy of the country which determines its development but the political forces which controls how the economy is used to the advantage or disadvantage of the country. This will be evident in the following paragraphs. To make sense of the economy of Africa I will discuss its strengths and weaknesses in accordance with four sectors, namely, agriculture, mining and drilling, manufacturing and, investment and banking.

### 2.6.2 **Agriculture:**

Sixty percent of Africans work in the agricultural sector, making the continent more reliant on agriculture than any other sector. However, three fifths of African farmers are subsistence farmers tilling just enough food to feed their families, leaving a small surplus for selling in various forms. There are also a significant number of farmers who till large farms for cash crops such as coffee, cotton, cocoa, and rubber, and are operated by large corporations employing large number of labourers. The snag in the agricultural sector is 1) the cultivation of crops for export while the continent starves; 2) the inability for Africa to compete globally because of countries like Japan, European Union and the United States' policies that protect their interests; 3) the subsidisation of farmers by these countries leading to overproduction of commodities such as grain, cotton and milk; 4) the introduction of high import tariffs, especially in light of crops that do not grow in the North.

These conditions lead Africa to expend excess capacity in growing crops for export; "as a result, when crisis sparked by civil unrest or a bad harvest occurs, there is no extra food saved that could make up the shortfall, and people starve" (Wikipedia: economic sectors).

### 2.6.3 **Mining and drilling**

By far Africa's most valuable exports are minerals and petroleum. These resources, though, are concentrated in only a few countries, with southern nations being rich in gold, diamonds and copper reserves, and northern nations, such as Nigeria and Libya having significant reserves of petroleum. These two commodities constitute Africa's major exports. The snag with this economic sector is that, while they bring in the most money into the continent: 1) it employs a small fraction of labour, i.e. about two million, 2) the huge profits derived from this trade lands in the hands of the few, either the large corporations or the governments; 3) the profits are spent on luxuries or huge projects that have no significant contribution to the life of the people; 4) they

have been a source of bitter rivalry and endless. Congo, for example, whilst rich in minerals remained one of the poorest countries in the world and has had these running battles since early 1900s.

#### 2.6.4 **Manufacturing**

Africa is the least industrialised continent with only South Africa having a substantial manufacturing sector. This industry requires a certain levels of education and skills, good infrastructure, a stable source of electricity, and political stability to bolster investment probability. The problem with this economic sector, however, is 1) according to African Development Bank (Wikipedia/economic/sectors 2008), it employs only 15% of the population; 2) Africa's educational and skills levels are very low, with an average literacy level of 62.7 between 2000 and 2004; 3) with most of Africa underdeveloped the required infrastructure and electricity supply remain pathetic; 4) the continent infested with conflict remains a high-risk zone for any aspiring foreign investors; 5) certain African countries placed limits to foreign investment to encourage local ownership and government control over the industry, to the detriment of foreign investment; subsequently; 6) Due to great lack, almost the entire natural resources of the country are exported elsewhere for refining and manufacturing—this despite large local supplies of cheap labour; 7) Africa's competitors, in terms of being poor, e.g. India and China, are more attractive to companies seeking to establish their businesses in foreign countries.

#### 2.6.5 **Investment and banking**

Banking in Africa is a problem area. Most states are served by local banks which are often unstable and corrupt. As a result governments and industry rely on international banks. South Africa remains the main exception as it boasts a thriving banking sector. This was bolstered partly by the international sanctions which were triggered by the campaign against apartheid which left the country to its own devices. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank make certain requirements and

these have recently improved conditions and prospects of foreign banks settling in Africa. The snag with this sector is, 1) governments' interventions stifle competition and scare foreign investment; 2) Africans themselves are reluctant to invest locally—about 40% of savings from sub-Saharan Africa are invested in other markets; 3) foreign investments, especially from governments, always come at a high price and have ulterior motives; 4) the IMF and World Bank place stringent conditions before and with any of their loans.

It is necessary to proceed further to shed light on other areas which I believe could assist the case of the renaissance in terms of facilitating its processes. These areas include issues around the geography, borders, language, xenophobia and disease.

#### 2.6.6 **Geography**

Much of Africa's geographical landscape is unsuited for trade and hampers its economy in several ways. Geographical factors that pose as deterrents include, 1) impenetrable rainforest; 2) deserts, of notoriety are the Kalahari in the south, which separate South African from the rest of Africa, and the Sahara which stages a monstrous barrier to trade in the north; 3) rivers, are mostly non-navigable. Even large rivers such as the Nile, Niger, Congo and Zambezi are, in comparison to rivers such as in Europe and China, beset with rapids and cataracts that require vast development projects if they are to be bypassed. 4) wetness of the interior, which makes roads impassable as few are paved. On the positive side, 1) climatic conditions, it has been found contribute to wealth. For example, South Africa, with a moderate temperature like large parts of Eurasia, is the wealthiest and the tropical areas, like those in South America and Indonesia, are among the poorest in the world, 2) The soil structure, makes Africa agriculturally the most suited continent (e.g. the volcanic soils of the Great Lakes), and has largest supplies of gold and diamond in the world, 3) and have large reserves of oil, especially in the north.

The study of geography accompanied by intensive research should transform most of the geographical challenges to opportunities. For example deserts are good spaces for discovery of dinosaur fossils<sup>17</sup> and may thus contribute greatly as nature's science laboratories and the potential for financial spin offs. Other opportunities include possibilities of wells of fossil energy. The city of Kuwait, the fifth richest in the world because oil wells (Cleveland 2000) and Las Vegas, the capital of gambling (Goetz 1988a:170), are a proof to the fact that adverse geographical conditions such as of a desert cannot deter the resolve for success to the extent of becoming a moneymaking industry.

### 2.6.7 Borders

Closely linked to 'geography' is the issue of borders. A related outcome of the 'Scramble for Africa' is that the national boundaries within sub-Saharan Africa were mostly established by Europeans using maps in Europe, frequently using geographical latitudes and longitudes rather than natural borders. In some cases this has separated population centres from their supplies of food or natural resources. Some of African states were created based initially on artificial borders, which often cut across cultural, tribal, linguistic and religious boundaries. These artificial borders created ethnic and religious cleavages which potentially made national unity more difficult and internal violence more likely. Africa has had and continues to have border related problems. The case of Ethiopia and Eritria which has claimed thousands of lives is one example among several. The quest for an African Renaissance and its complementary movement, the unity of Africa, should assist in addressing the issue of borders and their related complexities.

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<sup>17</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahara).

### 2.6.8 Language issues

The sheer cultural diversity of much of Africa also poses challenges. There is a huge variety of languages existing across Africa. Seven of the ten most linguistically diverse countries in the world are African. In 1996, the most linguistically diverse country in Africa was the Central African Republic, which included 68 distinct language groups spread across a population of 3.4 million people, with only 350,000 people belonging to the major language group in the country—the Sango. Situations similar to this, where language groups are comparatively small and where a considerable plurality of languages exists, are common in Africa. Additionally, 68 language groups is not the highest total of living languages in an African nation; Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, possesses over 400 language groups, while Cameroon encompasses 279 language groups, the Democratic Republic of Congo 221, Tanzania 131, Chad 127, and still more others have similarly high numbers.

An added difficulty is that in many states the primary language of government is the language of the former colonial powers namely English, French or Portuguese. Much of the political debate and discourse in Africa and Africa's institutions of learning is also conducted in these European languages. However, the majority of people in the nations rarely speak these European languages fluently enough to be able to participate in political debate except via intermediaries. This creates a divide between the elites and the rest of the population. An attempt to make reading material to all of these languages presents a mammoth, expensive and almost impossible task— that which even countries such South Africa with 11 official languages has had its own critics.

What role does language in the African Renaissance debate play? It is an indisputable fact in social sciences that *language* can be used as a very powerful tool. Language can be used negatively to exclude or marginalise others. This has been evident in South Africa during the so-called xenophobic unrests where the



shibboleth<sup>18</sup> saga replayed itself to identify foreign nationals and in unfortunate instances to even harm them. But language can come as bridging factor to foster cordial relationships. It can be useful in education, economy and cultural interaction across the continent. There is growing recognition of this factor in the global village especially with the role internet and DSTv<sup>19</sup> is playing in the information industry.

### 2.6.9 Xenophobia and the problems it poses to cooperation

I have earlier cited problems of conflict as a nagging feature of the African continent; even violent conflict. The problem of the dislike for 'the other' continues to confront many states and communities. In fact, it was Nicholas Bwakira, director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Liaison Office in New York, who once expressed concern that "African nations, which once welcomed refugees, are now cold-shouldering even their neighbours" (in Deen 2009). In a disconcerting voice, Bwakira painted a rather gloomy picture about the possibility of the hosting of refugees in countries neighbouring conflict hotspots. Bwakira (in Deen 2009) is quoted <sup>20</sup>as saying,

More and more African countries, which used to be generous, are closing their doors to refugees because of their economic and social constraints, and because of competition between their nationals and refugees for scarce resources."

It is in the light of "economic and social constraints" that I want to briefly focus on the South Africa's share in xenophobia. In recent times (especially 2008) South Africa became the focus in Africa because of concerted violent outbreak of xenophobia in

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<sup>18</sup>In a particular Biblical story, pronunciation was used to fish out rivals; cf. Joshua 12:5-6:"... the men of Gilead asked him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he replied, "No," they said, "All right, say `Shibboleth'." If he said, "Sibboleth", because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time". Similarly, the South African 'shibboleth' used to catch out unsuspecting foreign nationals was 'indololwane', an isiZulu word for 'elbow'.

<sup>19</sup> Digital Satellite Television (DSTv) is a popular pay television broadcasting across the continent of Africa and many other parts of the world.

<sup>20</sup> An Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency report ([www.ips.org](http://www.ips.org)).

major cities of the country. While it cannot be construed that South Africa is the only culprit on the continent, as indicated above, South Africa's case became exceptional as it did not only attract international attention but also widespread condemnation. All forms of media splashed the uprisings with accusations and counter-accusations levelled at all sides. The critical point raised in respect of South Africa is the position this country occupies strategically, especially as a beacon of hope for the good things hoped for in Africa, and in particular the leading role in the vision and mission of the African Renaissance.

Several studies have been conducted on Xenophobia and in South Africa arising from this sad experience several groups and individuals, both governmental and non-governmental have conducted their own researches and compiled important findings (cf. Forced Migrations Studies Program). It is not within the scope of my research to elaborate on this matter. However, I wish to draw few lines of observation which should serve as 'lessons' on the road to a 'new Africa'.

Factors that encourage Xenophobia are numerous but the following are the most important:

- 1) Xenophobia stems from a clash about limited or scarce resources. The grip of poverty on Africa will continue to plunge the continent into xenophobic crises. This should be a motivation point to African leadership towards delivering the continent out of this misery;
- 2) Hospitality of Africans is stretched to the limit when issues of survival creeps in, and those who are 'guests' overstay their welcome. The apparent hardened attitudes of political leaders and the lack of political will to resolve their countries' internal problems has had the tendency to harden the attitudes of host nationals as has been clearly voiced on numerous radio and TV talk shows and documentaries.
- 3) There are bound to be tensions when there is no proactive governmental intervention and provisions on how refugees should be accommodated and their stay negotiated properly with locals, especially those on the margins of the economic mainstream. The test of good governance is not how a

government runs its internal affairs only, but on how one establishes foreign policies that protect the locals but also equitably provides for the survival needs of refugees.

#### 2.6.10 Diseases

Over the ages diseases have devastated communities and nations, and Africa has not been spared from this condition. In the tropics malaria is the leading killer disease. The rise of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa has added another strain on the impoverished condition of the continent. The disease has hit hard even on the better off countries, including Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa. The sad thing about this condition is that pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to provide cure, especially for the countries in the relatively poor countries which as indicated above mostly lie in the tropical region. The effects of diseases are obvious, viz. 1) the care for the sick and their subsequent death is a very expensive exercise; 2) when it is the breadwinners who die their surviving family members who become widowed or orphaned, pose a dilemma for their governments; 3) the resources of the countries, which include the skilled labour, gets depleted; 4) in the light of this, Africans as travellers outside the continent are regarded as health risk and viewed with suspicion; 5) child-led families are on the increase and have become vulnerable to all forms of abuse, especially sexual which has gruesome consequences on the rest of the members of these families.

The test and the success of the African Renaissance is its ability to stave off major catastrophes. One of the achievements for which the prototype Renaissance was credited with, is the invention of remedies for the diseases that ravaged the European people at that time (Wikipedia/Medicinal\_Renaissance<sup>21</sup>). Africa should dig deep into

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<sup>21</sup> Ref. Hutchinson Encyclopedia of World History/Renaissance Medicine accessed 22/06/2010.

its own medicinal resources, for example, the discovery and use of the *Devil's Claw*<sup>22</sup>. Instead of demonising everything about Africa, its herbs and its many forms of healing, African Renaissance should seek to understand these healings and take a critical approach that is consistent with natural sciences and also respectful of faith traditions in the service of its human population.

In conclusion, I have presented an overview of the continent of Africa at beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I have found a rather sad and disturbing picture which requires expedient intervention. The call for African Renaissance is relevant and requires appropriate action. In the context of this scenario, as sketched above, I now discuss next the call for the African Renaissance wherein the source, the essence and the prospects of this call are extrapolated and critically analysed.

## **2.7 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 2**

I have indicated that the coming of a new major period such as the beginning of a century or a millennium often engenders new energy, major predictions, prophecies and resolutions. With these bodies of predictions of the future comes the requirement for retrospection and introspection mostly by the pragmatists, skeptics and pessimists. The preceding paragraphs have helped to give a picture of Africa that is both favourable and unfavourable. Critical major issues of life and death have clearly emerged. I presume a better understanding of where the continent stands at the beginning of this century and the millennium has been obtained. Chapter Two has also raised important Missiological questions which must address as an objective of this study. I state these in brief as pointers for further discussion in the next paragraph.

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<sup>22</sup> The *Devil's Claw*, an indigenous herb traditionally used by the KhoiSan people is an important ingredient in the medication for inflammation of joints ([www.manataka.org/native\\_remedies](http://www.manataka.org/native_remedies) accessed 22/06/2010).

## 2.8 Critical pointers for the African Renaissance and Missiology

- What are the important points to which African Renaissance should give special attention?

One critical thing that comes out clearly is bad governance that is accompanied by greed, self-interest and corruption. This is enough cause of mistrust, back-stabbing and elimination of competitors, opponents and critics. The spirit of patriotism and nationalism suffers under these conditions. Consequently, the indirect outcome is a condition of self-disrespect and self-hatred.

- What answers can Missiology provide to such conditions where personal interests and self-enrichment are placed above communal and national interests?

The next chapter discusses how Africa's visionary leaders try to respond to both conceptual and physical challenges.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3 THE CALL FOR AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

#### 3.1 Background history

The picture I have sketched in the previous chapter about Africa at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> millennium, is enough motivation for well meaning exponents of the African hope to begin to seek life-changing solutions. It is conceivable how the continent could produce leaders who would look beyond their borders to seek common good for the people of Africa in the understanding that the continent can only succeed when its leaders are 'cured' of parochial and selfish interests. This chapter tries to identify these leaders and their impact towards the renaissance dream.

#### 3.2 When & by whom was the call made?

There seems to be no clear time and origins of the call for an African Renaissance. Several recent authors on this topic specifically seem to limit the call for an African Renaissance to Mr Thabo Mbeki, who indeed is unmistakably the main drive behind this groundbreaking call of our time (cf. Okumu 2002:10; Maloka 2001:65) or Mr Nelson Mandela shortly before him (cf. Makgoba 1999:11). An overview of sources entitled "African Renaissance" written before these two South African leaders occupy Africa's political centre stage on this matter clearly places the call for African Renaissance much earlier (cf. Bloom in Bongmba 2004:296)

Cheru (2002) argues that "the notion of an 'African Renaissance' has been around in African political discourse since the colonial period". He claims that, "the Senegalese intellectual Cheick Anta Diop first used the term in the context of the struggle against colonial Africa in their quest for self-determination" (Cheru 2002:xii). While Cheru (2002) places the advent of the concept and its use quite earlier than most

predications he does not labour the matter enough to establish an undisputable case. Diop has made a collection of documents on 'Modern Africa'. Of particular relevance is the collection on what he calls, 'The African Renaissance and the African Past'. It must be said, though, that none of the excerpts refer to the term 'African Renaissance' *per se*. But in his introductory remarks he points to a term to which most of these documents refer to, namely, 'New Africa' and postulates by saying, it is an "ideology generally referred to as the African Renaissance" (in Cheru 2002: 112). His reading of these documents is that there lies in them a claim that "the renaissance in Europe was derived from Africa" (in Cheru 2002: 113). In this paragraph it should be amply clear that the notion of an African Renaissance has been conceived decades long before Mr Mbeki assumed political significance. Notwithstanding this however, the African Renaissance concept had not gained any significant attention in terms of institutionalisation nor had it been subjected to exclusive scientific scrutiny or development. It then warrants further investigation why this notion has recently become a household issue for politicians and most agents of development.

### **3.3 The prominence of the call by Thabo Mbeki**

The ascendance of Mr Thabo Mbeki to the presidency of the Republic of South Africa saw him rise both in stature as well as influence. This rise to the limelight of global politics has had several contributing factors. The release of Mr Nelson Mandela from prison after 27 years of incarceration, followed by the turn of events in the South African political history with the end of Apartheid era and the herald of a democratic dispensation certainly drew the attention of the world on South Africa, and in particular its new African leaders. The relatively peaceful change in the face of many international politics of conflict and bloodshed kept many both skeptics and well-wishers holding breath with unabated gasp of expectancy and anxiety. It was during this focal era that Mr Mandela started to echo sentiments on which African Renaissance protagonists could feed on. In his first speech at the Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) summit in Tunis, on 13 June 1994, he reminded African leaders:

And yet we can say this that the human civilisation rests on foundations such as the ruins of the African city of Carthage. Its architectural remains, like the remains, like the pyramids of Egypt, the sculptures of the ancient Ghana and Mali and Benin, like the temples of Ethiopia, the Zimbabwe ruins and the rock paintings of Kgaladi of the Namib Desert; all speak of Africa's contribution to the formation of civilisation (in Makgoba 1999:11).

In this speech Mr Mandela reinforced the contention that the glory of African past compares favourably with, if not that it provided a springboard to the other renaissance movements elsewhere, including Europe. In fact, this is apparent in Venter & Neuland's (2005:40-58) discussion of ten periods of renaissance in Africa spanning from the year 3100BCE to around 1600CE. The desire to see Africa clothed in glory was for Mandela not a mere lip service. For soon after South Africa was welcomed into the OAU, Mr Mandela was assigned a daunting task to broker peace at some of the fronts of political conflict, including Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe. At 76 years of age, health and strength was no longer in his favour, not even for the daunting task of reconciliation and nation building he was faced with in his home country. Like a real statesman, after only one term of rule, he relinquished his presidential duties to an aspiring and younger leader namely Mr Thabo Mbeki.

The ascendance to the presidency of South Africa was in the least not expected to bring any radical political changes in the country due to the nature of the constitution the government of national unity had adopted. Therefore, Mr Mbeki was bound to proceed to the best of his ability within the guiding principles of the negotiated political settlement mapped during the historical three summits of the First and Second Conventions for a Democratic South Africa in 1991 & 1992 and the Multi-Party Negotiation Process (MPNP) in 1993. What stood to be seen, however, was whether Mr Mbeki would take the continental baton which Mr Mandela had carried. In his speech he had this to say:



We will also work to rediscover and claim the African heritage, for the benefit especially of our young generations. From South Africa to Ethiopia lie strewn ancient fossils which, in their stillness, speak still of the African origins of all humanity. Recorded history and the material things that time left behind also speak of Africa's historic contribution to the universe of philosophy, the natural sciences, human settlement and organisation and the creative arts. Being certain that not always were we the children of the abyss, we will do what we have to do to achieve our own Renaissance. We trust that what we will do will not only better our own condition as a people, but will also make a contribution, however small, to the success of Africa's Renaissance, towards the identification of the century ahead of us as the African Century. (Mbeki 1999) An excerpt of his speech: <http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/speeches/1999/mbek0616.htm>: accessed 31.05 2010)

In this speech already, Mr Mbeki's sentiment for the renewal of the African continent cannot be mistaken. His priority clearly lies with his own country and on the same breath he immediately impresses that it would not be the 'only' thing to do, but "make a contribution ... to the success of Africa's Renaissance." This sentiment was to characterise most of his speeches locally and abroad.

Of greater significance is former-President Mbeki's speech of 8 May 1996 to the Constitutional Assembly, on the occasion of the adoption of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill, in Cape Town, which for its historic significance and acclaim, I reproduce here below in full<sup>23</sup>:

I am an African.

I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land.

My body has frozen in our frosts and in our latter day snows. It has thawed in the warmth of our sunshine and melted in the heat of the midday sun. The crack and the rumble of the summer thunders, lashed by startling lightening, have been a cause both of trembling and of hope.

The fragrances of nature have been as pleasant to us as the sight of the wild blooms of the citizens of the veld.

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<sup>23</sup> While the speech is located here in this text, its contents will reverberate throughout most of this study as it touches on several issues I will progressively address.

The dramatic shapes of the Drakensberg, the soil-coloured waters of the Lekoa, iGqili noThukela, and the sands of the Kgalagadi, have all been panels of the set on the natural stage on which we act out the foolish deeds of the theatre of our day.

At times, and in fear, I have wondered whether I should concede equal citizenship of our country to the leopard and the lion, the elephant and the springbok, the hyena, the black mamba and the pestilential mosquito.

A human presence among all these, a feature on the face of our native land thus defined, I know that none dare challenge me when I say - I am an African!

I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape - they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide our native land has ever seen, they who were the first to lose their lives in the struggle to defend our freedom and dependence and they who, as a people, perished in the result.

Today, as a country, we keep an audible silence about these ancestors of the generations that live, fearful to admit the horror of a former deed, seeking to obliterate from our memories a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering, should teach us not and never to be inhuman again.

I am formed of the migrants who left Europe to find a new home on our native land. Whatever their own actions, they remain still, part of me.

In my veins courses the blood of the Malay slaves who came from the East. Their proud dignity informs my bearing, their culture a part of my essence. The stripes they bore on their bodies from the lash of the slave master are a reminder embossed on my consciousness of what should not be done.

I am the grandchild of the warrior men and women that Hintsa and Sekhukhune led, the patriots that Cetshwayo and Mphephu took to battle, the soldiers Moshoeshoe and Ngungunyane taught never to dishonour the cause of freedom.

My mind and my knowledge of myself is formed by the victories that are the jewels in our African crown, the victories we earned from Isandhlwana to Khartoum, as Ethiopians and as the Ashanti of Ghana, as the Berbers of the desert.

I am the grandchild who lays fresh flowers on the Boer graves at St Helena and the Bahamas, who sees in the mind's eye and suffers the suffering of a simple peasant folk, death, concentration camps, destroyed homesteads, a dream in ruins.

I am the child of Nongqause. I am he who made it possible to trade in the world markets in diamonds, in gold, in the same food for which my stomach yearns.

I come of those who were transported from India and China, whose being resided in the fact, solely, that they were able to provide physical labour, who taught me that we could both be at home and be foreign, who taught me that human existence itself demanded that freedom was a necessary condition for that human existence.

Being part of all these people, and in the knowledge that none dare contest that assertion, I shall claim that - I am an African.

I have seen our country torn asunder as these, all of whom are my people, engaged one another in a titanic battle, the one redress a wrong that had been caused by one to another and the other, to defend the indefensible.

I have seen what happens when one person has superiority of force over another, when the stronger appropriate to themselves the prerogative even to annul the injunction that God created all men and women in His image.

I know what it signifies when race and colour are used to determine who is human and who, sub-human.

I have seen the destruction of all sense of self-esteem, the consequent striving to be what one is not, simply to acquire some of the benefits which those who had improved themselves as masters had ensured that they enjoy.

I have experience of the situation in which race and colour is used to enrich some and impoverish the rest.

I have seen the corruption of minds and souls in the pursuit of an ignoble effort to perpetrate a veritable crime against humanity.

I have seen concrete expression of the denial of the dignity of a human being emanating from the conscious, systemic and systematic oppressive and repressive activities of other human beings.

There the victims parade with no mask to hide the brutish reality - the beggars, the prostitutes, the street children, those who seek solace in substance abuse, those who have to steal to assuage hunger, those who have to lose their sanity because to be sane is to invite pain.

Perhaps the worst among these, who are my people, are those who have learnt to kill for a wage. To these the extent of death is directly proportional to their personal welfare.

And so, like pawns in the service of demented souls, they kill in furtherance of the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal. They murder the innocent in the taxi wars.

They kill slowly or quickly in order to make profits from the illegal trade in narcotics. They are available for hire when husband wants to murder wife and wife, husband.

Among us prowl the products of our immoral and amoral past - killers who have no sense of the worth of human life, rapists who have absolute disdain for the women of our country, animals who would seek to benefit from the vulnerability of the children, the disabled and the old, the rapacious who brook no obstacle in their quest for self-enrichment.

All this I know and know to be true because I am an African!

Because of that, I am also able to state this fundamental truth that I am born of a people who are heroes and heroines.

I am born of a people who would not tolerate oppression.

I am of a nation that would not allow that fear of death, torture, imprisonment, exile or persecution should result in the perpetuation of injustice.

The great masses who are our mother and father will not permit that the behaviour of the few results in the description of our country and people as barbaric.

Patient because history is on their side, these masses do not despair because today the weather is bad. Nor do they turn triumphalist when, tomorrow, the sun shines.

Whatever the circumstances they have lived through and because of that experience, they are determined to define for themselves who they are and who they should be.

We are assembled here today to mark their victory in acquiring and exercising their right to formulate their own definition of what it means to be African.

The constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender or historical origins.

It is a firm assertion made by ourselves that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

It gives concrete expression to the sentiment we share as Africans, and will defend to the death, that the people shall govern.

It recognises the fact that the dignity of the individual is both an objective which society must pursue, and is a goal which cannot be separated from the material well-being of that individual.

It seeks to create the situation in which all our people shall be free from fear, including the fear of the oppression of one national group by another, the fear of the disempowerment of one social echelon by another, the fear of the use of state power to deny anybody their fundamental human rights and the fear of tyranny.

It aims to open the doors so that those who were disadvantaged can assume their place in society as equals with their fellow human beings without regard to colour, race, gender, age or geographic dispersal.

It provides the opportunity to enable each one and all to state their views, promote them, strive for their implementation in the process of governance without fear that a contrary view will be met with repression.

It creates a law-governed society which shall be inimical to arbitrary rule.

It enables the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means rather than resort to force.

It rejoices in the diversity of our people and creates the space for all of us voluntarily to define ourselves as one people.

As an African, this is an achievement of which I am proud, proud without reservation and proud without any feeling of conceit.

Our sense of elevation at this moment also derives from the fact that this magnificent product is the unique creation of African hands and African minds.

But it also constitutes a tribute to our loss of vanity that we could, despite the temptation to treat ourselves as an exceptional fragment of humanity, draw on the accumulated experience and wisdom of all humankind, to define for ourselves what we want to be.

Together with the best in the world, we too are prone to pettiness, petulance, selfishness and short-sightedness.

But it seems to have happened that we looked at ourselves and said the time had come that we make a super-human effort to be other than human, to respond to the call to create for ourselves a glorious future, to remind ourselves of the Latin saying: Gloria est consequenda - Glory must be sought after!

Today it feels good to be an African.

It feels good that I can stand here as a South African and as a foot soldier of a titanic African army, the African National Congress, to say to all the parties represented here, to the millions who made an input into the processes we are concluding, to our outstanding compatriots who have presided over the birth of our founding document, to the negotiators who pitted their wits one against the other, to the unseen stars who shone unseen as the management and administration of the Constitutional Assembly, the advisers, experts and publicists, to the mass communication media, to our friends across the globe - congratulations and well done!

I am an African.

I am born of the peoples of the continent of Africa.

The pain of the violent conflict that the peoples of Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi and Algeria is a pain I also bear.

The dismal shame of poverty, suffering and human degradation of my continent is a blight that we share.

The blight on our happiness that derives from this and from our drift to the periphery of the ordering of human affairs leaves us in a persistent shadow of despair.

This is a savage road to which nobody should be condemned.

This thing that we have done today, in this small corner of a great continent that has contributed so decisively to the evolution of humanity says that Africa reaffirms that she is continuing her rise from the ashes.

Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now!  
 Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!  
 However improbable it may sound to the skeptics, Africa will prosper!

Whoever we may be, whatever our immediate interest, however much we carry baggage from our past, however much we have been caught by the fashion of cynicism and loss of faith in the capacity of the people, let us err today and say - nothing can stop us now!

Thank you (Mbeki 1996)

Mr Mbeki's entry line, "I am an African", immediately sets him in the tradition of the heralds of African leaders who adopted the same phrase as their trade mark. Well-known for the same expression were Kwame Nkrumah, the President of Ghana, Cheikh Anta Diop and fellow South African Isaka Seme<sup>24</sup> (Bongmba 2004:295) While the utterances of these were important this did not offset them as exponents of African Renaissance. This then distinguishes Mbeki who in every sense captivated his listeners with his poetic style whenever he occupied the podium. From this time onwards when Mr Mbeki occupied the centre stage of African and global politics the use of this notion multiplied too. As the use intensified the concept could not but be institutionalised. "Following Thabo Mbeki's speech in 1996, a few African strategists and intellectuals held consultations with a view to formulating pragmatic operational strategies for mobilizing and networking Africa's human resources in terms of intellectual wealth and enterprise for an African Renaissance in the third millennium" (Okumu, 2002: 265). Subsequently the African Renaissance Institute, which was previously called, the Institute for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development was founded with its operational centre in Gaborone, Botswana. In South Africa, the University of South Africa (Unisa) established an exclusive Centre for African Renaissance Studies with its own buildings, administration and lecturers, offering post-graduate programs. Several conferences were called in order to begin to give substance to what should understand by this 'institution'. Numerous print media articles were written from different perspectives, including that of skeptics and cynicists, on the one hand and devotees and optimists on the other (cf. Among others, Bongmba 2004, Maundeni 2004, Olivier 2003, Vale & Maseko 1998). I can thus clearly say, as many observe, that Thabo Mbeki is the main protagonist of the concept of an African Renaissance.

### **3.4 Precursors to the African Renaissance call**

In order to evaluate the African Renaissance movement in its proper perspective, I need to interrogate the African Renaissance, its creators, agents, or interlocutors

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<sup>24</sup> More on this name, see *footnote 25*.

from its inception, even how inconsequential their contributions could have might have been.

### 3.4.1 Pixley ka Isaka Seme<sup>25</sup>

Van Grasdorff (2005:64<sup>26</sup>) is of the opinion that the dawn of the African Renaissance should not be seen as a monolithic experience, but as what ‘happened’ in the ‘new world’ by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. He claims that it was a concerted effort of diverse actions of armed struggles, as was the case even much earlier by the 17<sup>th</sup> Century by the Khoikhoi and the Xhosa people in their 100 years war against the Dutch and British colonial armies, including acts of “diplomacy, peaceful petitions [and] newspaper campaigns” (:65). Several undercurrents of contestation and struggle became evident both on the continent and elsewhere by people of African descent. These incidents clearly linked the spirit of Pan-Africanism<sup>27</sup> on the continent and of Diasporal struggle elsewhere, which expressedly adopted trademark slogans such as, ‘the problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the problem of the colour line’ and ‘Africa for the Africans’ (:65), among others. These slogans came to be lodged in, as well as finding expression through movements like *Négritude Cri Nègre* and *Renascent Negro* (Van Grasdorff 2005:65). It was Pixley ka Isaka Seme who, in 1906, called for the regeneration of Africa. He made this call in April 1906 in a speech at Columbia University. In his speech “he used the agricultural and religious metaphor of

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<sup>25</sup> Seme’s name is presented in several forms, including, Pixley Isaka ka Seme ([www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net) accessed 16.09.2010), Pixley ka Seme ([www.durban.gov.za](http://www.durban.gov.za) accessed 16.09.2010) or Isaka Seme (Bongmba 2004:295).

<sup>26</sup>Van Grasdorff, E. 2005. *African Renaissance and discourse ownership in the Information Age: The internet as a factor of domination and liberation*, Munster: Lit Verlag.

<sup>27</sup>Pan-Africanism gained momentum after the 1884-85 Berlin congresses known for the scramble for and partition of Africa by European powers. In 1886 George Charles president of African Emigration Association told the US Congress that his association planned to establish a United States of Africa. In 1893 the Pan-Africanists’ Congress on Africa denounced the act of the Berlin congresses.

‘regeneration’ to articulate the need for a new beginning in Africa” (Bongmba, 2004:295). Even though Seme did not use the actual word, ‘renaissance’, his use of related terminology, made an important contribution to the African Renaissance discussion, especially in that he is South African and therefore predates his compatriot Mr Mbeki in this search for Africa’s renewal.

### 3.4.2 Len Bloom

Much later, in 1964, another South African, Len Bloom, based on H. Powdermaker study, engaged a interdisciplinary approach on renewal and rebirth had this to say, “Today is the African Renaissance, and with development or archeology, history, sociology, anthropology, and economics in African university institutions, Africans rejecting the arrogant colonial myth that Africa had ‘no civilisation’ and slumbered during historical time” (in Bongmba, 2004:296).

## 3.5 The rationale behind the call for the African Renaissance

I think a frequently asked question is why is there so much hype about the African Renaissance? Why does it deserve the attention of the rank and file of this continent? Should the global community be equally concerned? There are several articles and a few books already written on the African Renaissance, each with a particular interest in this subject. In this paragraph I will confine myself specifically to the reasons advanced by the key proponents of the African Renaissance, mentioned discussed above, especially Mr Thabo Mbeki, to try to come as close as possible to the thinking that drives the African Renaissance. I will appeal to the reasons they themselves advance as derived from their writings and original speeches. Other commentaries purporting to talk for the call for the African Renaissance will take supportive roles. I should, however, first agree with Okumu (2002:10)<sup>28</sup> in admitting that this is a difficult

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<sup>28</sup>Even though Okumu wrote in 2002, many writings that followed have been at the level of interpretation by observers of the African Renaissance , while there continued to be a



exercise, especially because, as he says, what the substance of the African Renaissance entails remains scattered in newspapers articles, journals, monographs, and pamphlets, making a general synthesis a difficult undertaking. Nevertheless, I will proceed to list some of the most direct and overt reasons for the call for the African Renaissance:

### 3.5.1 **A continent in despair**

Cheru (2002:3) notes that the 1980s and 1990s had been billed as Africa's 'lost development decades'. I have sketched this gloomy picture already in the previous chapter. But the response of many would be to think only in local or at best regional terms. But it requires true statesmanship to think globally or to be precise in pan-Africanist terms. This has been former-President Mbeki's position, despite critics who hoped solely for a domestic agenda (Bongmba, 2004:297), but disputed by Mulemfo (2005:38) who by using the expression, "charity begins at home", argues that Mbeki has avoided the mistake made by Nkrumah who was "African first and Ghanaian second" a position that led to his political demise.

### 3.5.2 **African identity and legitimacy**

There seems to be logical posturing by African Renaissance protagonists to make claims of their Africanness as part of their philosophic stance. Diop argued that African writers and cultural élites had abandoned African languages and could not be genuine messengers of an African Renaissance (Bongmba 2004:295). Mbeki too in his renowned address better known as "I am an African", makes an emphatic claim to his Africanness. It would appear that to be an agent of African Renaissance one has to make claims to African roots. I have indicated earlier on that this identity question has seriously been complicated by Mr Mbeki's caricature of "an African". Nevertheless, it can then be said that the thinking behind the call for an African Renaissance is that one should demonstrate an affinity and identity to the African lot. This consequently lends legitimacy in claiming a stake among those who think, speak and participate on the affairs of Africa.

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sturdy increase in written speeches by Mr Mbeki (and to a lesser extent other thinkers ).

### 3.5.3 **A post-nationalist stance**

An African identity for the purposes of African Renaissance is not adequate. African Renaissance to be able to make an impact on the African economic, socio-political plane cannot avoid issues of nationalism. The example of Kwame Nkrumah, once again comes to the fore. He did not confine himself to issues of Ghana alone, but concerned himself with other issues beyond his country's borders. Bongmba (2004:296) calls the thinking of going beyond national borders, a "post-nationalist ideology" and ascribes such thinking to the African Renaissance. Its scope is the whole continent. It is in the light of this thinking that several post-nationalist programs were formed, among others, the Lagos Plan of 1980, Abuja Treaty of 1991, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa of 1996, New African Initiative (NAI) followed by New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Bongmba 2004:296). Such programs are of necessity multicultural and multidisciplinary. Strategically part of the post-colonialist approach is to adopt a regional integrational method, where countries in the same region engage in collaborative exercises. This approach has apparently proven successful as evidenced by World Bank's support of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (Cheru 2002:122-123). Post-nationalist stance has its own critics. The fear of imperialism is one threat sounded by critics. The support of Mr Mbeki by the African National Congress (ANC) government through legislation threw caution in the air by observers who suspected, in my view, a possible *Pax Praetoriana*<sup>29</sup> seated in Pretoria, the executive capital of the South African government (*cf.* Legum 1983; Lesufi 2006:24). Lesufi (2006:37) is wary at the development of Mr Mbeki's foreign policy and makes strong suggestions in the direction of neo-imperialism.

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<sup>29</sup>Derived from *Pax Romana* (a period during the reign of the Roman Empire ca. 27 BCE to 180CE during which restraint from violent conflict was encouraged, in which relative peace and prosperity through coercion and propaganda was achieved).

### 3.5.4 **The transformation mode**

The decline or stagnation in cultural, social, economic and political areas of a 'the continent in despair' has had the obvious demand for the reversal of these conditions and the bringing about of better conditions for all the inhabitants. This is evident in Seme's regeneration metaphor (Bongmba 2004:295-296) and Bloom's rejection of colonial myth that Africa had "no civilisation" and slumbered during historical time (Bongmba 2004:296). The trend in transformation seems to be historically arranged according to priority of needs. Hence, the initial quest for transformation was at the level of human development (Cheru 2002:4) in the bid to restore the dignity of the African people battered by degrading and inhumane treatment by the colonial powers. But transformation has to touch various areas of human existence and address worldviews and concepts that were are perceived to be detrimental to the success of the renewal. Transformation should therefore touch democracy, youth development, gender, in terms of involvement of women in decision making structures of governance; postmodern thinking that is free from stereotypes imposed by belief systems hostile to development and innovation, embracing ideas that are compatible to cooperation in the global village.

### 3.5.5 **The development focus**

Issues of cultural regeneration and enculturation featured prominently at the beginning of colonial rule in the early 1960s. But as decades went by, it became clear that intervention was necessary at economic political level (Cheru 2002:9). This became evident as most political heroes and leaders became villains because of their destructive policies and practices that drove their countries deep into economic decline (Cheru 2002:9). This negative change on the African face then distinguishes Mr Mbeki's thinking from earlier African Renaissance exponents. Mr Mbeki's speech at the Corporate Council summit at Chantilly, Virginia, in the USA on the subject "Attracting capital in Africa" clearly outlines his economic philosophy for an African Renaissance (Okumu, 2002:160). In his speech he laid bare the failures of Africa by criticising one-party states and military governments. He cut his niche towards the transformation of the African political scene by strongly advocating democratic values

and advancing them in imperative terms such as, “the people must govern” (Okumu 2002:161).

### **3.6 Critics and sceptics of the African Renaissance call**

Where odds are stacked against noble intentions and programs there will naturally be questions and subsequently critics and sceptics. In this paragraph I will establish the source and nature of such criticism and try to look at their merits. My premonition is that it will be evident that many critics will naturally come from the side of Afropessimistic counterparts, mostly based outside the continent, but I am equally wary of internal critics who by judging Africa’s history have been petrified to a sense of hopelessness. I have already referred to this in a previous paragraph (*cf.* Continent in despair).

#### **3.6.1 Conceptual and philosophical arguments**

External critics have taken upon themselves to interrogate African Renaissance for what it means. Okumu (2002:1) notes that the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Western media and international commentators say that the concept is stillborn, because it is ill-defined and lacking direction. In the conceptual world where clarity is obtained by well defined concepts or phenomena, such a comment was ever forthcoming. There were internal critics too. When in South Africa, the ANC led government tried hard to popularise the concept, but the African diplomatic community was less enthusiastic. According to Thami Mazwai, the leading organiser of the African Renaissance conference of 1998, the conference heard that many African ambassadors declined the invitation to the conference. “They ask, ‘What’s this African renaissance nonsense?’” (Mazwai, in Maloka 2007). If this comment is anything to go by, it helps to compound the perceptive deficiency relating to the African Renaissance internally, that is, among Africans. It is even bad publicity for the continent when such remarks come from the diplomatic corps, the very people who should have been at the forefront of advancing the course of the movement. One might assume that it was still early days when such statements were made. At one

level the debate got trapped in the comparative wrangle by those who attempt to view the African Renaissance through the spectacles of the European Renaissance. In fact the Pan Africanist Congress<sup>30</sup> took an ambiguous position when “some of its leaders claim[ed] the ‘African Renaissance’ as ‘theirs’, others dismissing it as ‘confusion’, and the so-called ‘African Renaissance’[that] that is trying to borrow and transpose its ‘European Renaissance’ rationale” (Pheko 1999). The following are some of the reasons advanced against the notion of the African Renaissance:

- 1) The time span: the European Renaissance took several hundred years (Okumu 2002:148), and the naming was then retrospective;
- 2) Maloka (2007) presents a consignment of his own, saying, The concept is perceived as a South African foreign policy and is, according to Moeletsi Mbeki, the brother to former-President Mbeki, conveyed under a clout of ‘triumphalist syndrome’
- 3) Periodisation of the renaissance discourse, whereby South Africans tend to date the discourse to 1994 or 1996, which neglects the earlier contributions by Mnadi Azikiwe and Cheik Anta Diop (Maloka 2007). Within this problem of periodisation the contributions of earlier movements are equally ignored such as the Pan Africanism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lagos Plan of Action (1980), the Abuja Treaty (1991) or even prominent Kampala Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) of May 1991, viewed by many as the ‘kick start of the current renaissance movement’ (Maloka 2007);
- 4) Another debate stems from the usage of the term ‘renaissance’, denoting rebirth, was according to some European scholars not peculiar to the ‘Renaissance’ period itself but, as Peter Burke (in Maloka 2001) claims, ‘is a myth in that the claims of innovations thought to have been brought about were in fact the property of the Middle Ages;
- 5) Burke uses the term ‘myth’ in a dual sense: firstly, as statements about the

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<sup>30</sup>The PAC is an organisation that broke away from the ANC in 1959 over the latter’s position to uphold non-racialism (Maloka 2007).

past which can be shown as false or misleading and secondly, as a symbolic story told about characters that are larger than life, told to explain or justify some present state of affairs. Maloka (2007) uses these interpretations to present a contrast which African Renaissance seems to suggest, that is, “it is not a celebration of an accomplished past, but an aspiration and somehow even apocalyptic” (Maloka, 2007). From this premise Maloka constructs a further hypothesis which adds another dimension to this conceptual debate as follows:

The ‘Renaissance’ as a metaphorical projection into the future assumes that, in certain minimum objective conditions and subjective factors the future can be predicted with certainty. The subject has confidence not only in his/her subjective intervention in the historical process, but also in the hope that historical forces can be brought under control with relative ease. Hence the debate in question, moving from the ‘second moment’ as an objective given, explores ways and means (the subjective factor) to bring about the ‘third moment’ (Maloka, 2007);

and lastly,

- 6) Viable models of economic political systems to be adopted if African Renaissance has to succeed. Okumu (2002:153) raises several debates, including communism and collectivism versus capitalism and political democracy. The conceptual debates are, however, dwarfed by other serious practical problems.

### 3.6.2 Real and practical problems

#### 3.6.2.1 “Big Men” and “Strong Men”

The political problems of Africa, as already discussed above have many faces. Probably one of the devastating causes of misery on the continent is what Okumu calls, “Big Men” and “Strong Men”. An image of such leaders is presented by

Sandbrook (in Okumu 2002:75-76):

‘The Strong Man’, usually the president, occupies the centre of political life. Front and centre stage, he is the centrifugal force around which all else revolves. Not only is he the ceremonial Head of State, the president is also the chief political, military and cultural figure: Head of Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, head of the governing party (where there is no military rule) and Chancellor of all local universities. His aim is typically to identify his person with the “nation”. His physical self is omnipresent: as in Orwell’s *1984*, Big Brother’s picture is plastered on public walls, billboards and even paper money and even T-shirts and buttons, often distributed to the party faithful. Schools, hospitals and stadiums are named after him. The mass media, electronic and printed, herald his every word and action, no matter how insignificant. The cult of personality may even extend to an identification of a country’s recent history with the wise, heroic and magnanimous deeds and decisions of the leader.

The paragraph above is a muffled description of the “Strong Man”. It does not say much of the atrocious inclinations that belie such a ‘harmless’ façade. Hence I would rather rename this depiction an image of a “Big Man”. The transition from a “Big Man” to a “Strong Man” is often very swift propelled by the threat to the grip of power and all the accompanying benefits. Therefore, in my view, a more appropriate description, is less refined and describes the “Strong Men” as “greedy and predatory leaders who do not want to relinquish power, let alone allow their citizens political freedom and economic prosperity” (Okumu 2002:21). Okumu (2002) further cites *The Economist* (a London-based journal) which depicts these leaders as those “who joyride around the world in custom-designed jets and squander most of the taxpayers’ money in expensive hotels in Europe and America and on unbelievably extravagant shopping sprees” (Okumu 2002:69). This description paints the extravagant picture of the nature of these leaders. Their being “big” is a caricature of men who surround themselves with groups lesser in stature. These groups have a life of their own but are very dangerous and serve their interests employing vengeful tactics against

criticism and against whoever questions their authority and actions. In fact, “Strong Men” are self-evidently leaders with military muscle, emerging in the aftermath of independence from colonial rule (Okumu 2002:74). Their being unschooled in the rudiments of democracy, employ suppressive and autocratic methods to impose their will against any demands for democracy, freedom or ethnic minorities’ who cry for fairness. Whenever “Strong Men” feel threatened they do not hesitate to shed blood of those they perceive as traitors or dissidents (cf. Okumu 2002:75).

The call for African Renaissance is particularly poised to address Africa’s “Big Men” and “Strong Men”. Its drive for good governance, a strong element of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development), would consequently require these leaders to transform from agents of pain and suffering, to those of hope, relief and restoration. The coming of Nelson Mandela to Africa’s political scene gave this hope. His coming to power coincided with the execution of the Ogoni community leaders of Nigeria by the authoritarian military regime led by General Sani Abacha. Mandela’s reaction to this man-slaughter is best described in Ngomba’s words, “furious and humiliated” (Ngomba 2007). The fact of “humiliation” should be understood in the light of the interview he gave the previous day at the Commonwealth Conference in New Zealand on his view about the political state of Nigeria, to which he said he was “sanguine” (Ngomba, 2007). Subsequently, through Mandela’s call for stern action, “the conference suspended Nigeria from the Commonwealth, but Mandela wanted more, including diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions and pointed the way by withdrawing the South African High Commissioner. He called on Western states to boycott Nigerian oil and summoned an extraordinary meeting of the SADC at which he called for coordinated pressure on Nigeria” (Ngomba, 2007). His move action against “Strong Men” amounted to nothing except to be seen, in the opinion of Mr Thabo Mbeki, a manipulation of the west exposing him to ridicule (Ngomba, 2007). Thabo Mbeki’s approach would be to act in concert with other countries in order to underscore the emergence of a generation of Africans who “must resist all tyranny, oppose all attempts to deny liberty, to resort to demagoguery ... and reassert the fundamental concept that we are our own liberators from oppression” (Hadland and Rantao in Okumu, 2002:77). Ngomba points out, however, that Thabo Mbeki’s



actions viewed against this statement could not stand the test of time, for two reasons: 1) Ngomba criticises Mbeki's message of congratulations, to Mr Yar'Adua of Nigeria after the country flawed parliamentary and presidential elections of April 2007. He notes that of all African statesmen he was first to convey such a message. That alone was an indictment against the principles of democracy he was promoting; 2) Mr Mbeki's persistent 'quiet diplomacy' against the president of Zimbabwe, Mr Robert Mugabe, could only be described as a "*chastise not thy friend*" ethos that is also a flawed diplomacy (Ngomba 2007). Mr Mbeki's actions by far falls short of Mr Mandela's honest stance on human rights issues. It is a betrayal of the civil society which depends on the external pressure of credible leaders for the alleviation of their domestic political problems.

### **3.6.2.2 *The misery of wars***

The subject of wars is closely related to the issue of 'Big Men' and 'Strong Men'. It is common knowledge that a war has, in the least, the potential to upset individual, family, national as well as regional lives. These wars have claimed lives of millions of people. Wars in Africa have deep roots. According to Cheru (2002:193) these roots date back to the colonial period. The political structuring of communities with emphasis on ethnical differentiation and imposition of artificial boundaries has played catalyst to protracted conflicts. The post-colonial era at best inherited these conditions. Attempts by post-colonial regimes were to forge unity through law and order by instituting centralised governance. This however spawned fertile ground for nepotism, corruption and abuse of power. In the wake of these digressions from common good political pluralism also suffered.

The following facts will try to illustrate the gravity of wars:

### **3.6.2.3 *War-related deaths:***

Since 1955 five million civilians are estimated to have died as a result of wars. Since 1970 more than thirty wars have been fought in Africa. The intensity of wars can be seen in that, in 1996 alone, fourteen of fifty three countries of Africa were engaged in

armed conflicts. These accounted for more than half of wars worldwide. One of the cruelest of war episodes was the Rwanda massacres where more than 800 000 were killed in 100 days. In Mozambique about 490 000 children died under war related circumstances. The call for African Renaissance with a view to peace and stability is just attempt to rid life in Africa of the devastation war has on human life and life in general (Cheru 2002:194).

#### **3.6.2.4      *Displacement of people:***

It is reckoned that in the last decade of the past century, half of the world's displaced people were found in Africa. There have been 3 to 4 million cross border refugees, with the 'Horn of Africa' the worst affected. Internally displaced being the less to determine comprise a huge number closing on 20 million people. Critical among the victims of displacements are a large number of widows and orphans (Cheru 2002:194).

#### **3.6.2.5      *Disintegration of human and social life:***

Closely related to displacement of people is the fact that the social fibre of communities is adversely affected. These include family, clan and tribal structures and their functionalities. For instance, Rwanda's genocide has left a population composed of 70 percent women, and a 50 percent of all households headed by women. These women are themselves vulnerable to various types of malice and abuse, and that apart from the struggle to feed families. The psychological effects of these wars on the victims and perpetrators cannot be quantified. In Mozambique, the fact that more than 10 000 children served as soldiers in the conflict is already an ingredient of long-lasting pathological crisis that would continue to haunt the society (Cheru 2002:194). African Renaissance is about restoration of broken human life and reconstruction of shattered communities.

Wars are actively generated by human greed and intent to abuse power. However, one area that stealthily smothers communities to a point of helplessness is the issue of health. It would be insufficient to conclude the rationale behind the call for African Renaissance without a brief look at health issues as equally valid factors in the equation for this call.

### **3.6.2.6 The numbing effect of HIV/AIDS and other diseases**

I have already indicated how health science and technology made strides during the European Renaissance. The suggestion here is that a serious challenge and threat to life has the tendency to inspire human capacity to acts of unprecedented heights. Africa has and is still labouring under catastrophic health challenges. Reports indicate, among the diseases that threaten Africa, Malaria, TB and HIV/Aids are the most devastating to human life. As far as AIDS is concerned, Quattek (in Shell, *et al* 2000) paints with figures a graphic and horrific picture about the affected and the effect of AIDS on the society, economy and other sectors, at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it is the plight of HIV/Aids that is the one single factor that proves to be a nightmare to Africa's optimists (*cf.* Saayman & Kriel 1991).

It is at the time such as this that the call for African Renaissance should make sense. A new birth, a new 'world order' simply because the present order is a perpetuation of suffering and painful denial of humans, animals, vegetation, space and the entire life' support systems for the continuation of normal life and the development of their potential optimum capacities.

## **3.7 Optimists and supporters of the African Renaissance call**

### **3.7.1 Exchanging bullet with ballot**

Many observers and role players on and in Africa who harbour sentiments of hope elevate the question of peace as an essential component without which the dream of a reborn Africa can be realised. However, Onsarigo (in Maloka, 2001:234) suggests that in rebuilding Africa, peace needs to be redefined. For the purposes of her argument, she contends that, peace should '... not be defined as the absence of conflict between and within states, but the absence of economic and social injustice'. While her point is valid, her definition is in a sense reductionist, in my view, and feeds into non-violent and peaceful forms of struggle. It is from such a vantage that

Onsarigo's persuasion for women's involvement in activities for education, poverty alleviation and political participation should be understood and commended (Onsarigo in Maloka, 2001:239-240). I contend that hers feeds into politics of the ballot as opposed to politics of the bullet.

Notwithstanding, Onsarigo, pro-developmental stance, it would be a serious error to prematurely tone down peace efforts to developmental issues<sup>31</sup>, while grim bloodletting continues to ravage the continent. In conventional terms, peace means, absence of war or other hostilities. The current *status quo* is that Africa is still far from that (cf. "Wars" above). In his 1993 speech, at the conference on U.S. Foreign Policy titled, "An African Agenda", organised by Washington Office Africa, the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo painted a current repulsive picture of Africa which was rife with conflicts. His speech was nevertheless based on hope.

Mr Obasanjo's view of a lasting peace in Africa rested on what he called 'four broad issue areas', namely, 1) redirecting the mind, 2) redefining sovereignty, 3) redefinition of security and 4) institutionalisation of democracy (Obasanjo 1993:67-68). By and large, Mr Obasanjo's speech was anchored on the ideals of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) a process coined in 1991 under the auspices of African Leadership Forum in Kampala (Obasanjo 1993:72). At the hub of this process was a suggestion of the establishment of a African Peace Council (*alias* African Elders Peace Council) comprised of 'the most distinguished personalities and African elder-Statesmen' whose role would be to act as 'centres of influence being able to hold society together during moments of drift and ... able to douse possible conflagrations in moments of inflamed passions' (Obasanjo 1993:74).

In the paragraphs above I have highlighted the most serious of the challenges that face the prospect of a new birth in the total state of Africa. I have observed that the

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<sup>31</sup>In fact, Mr Mandela talked of 'development' and 'peace' as 'twin issues' that remain principal challenges for developing countries (cf. His 1998 speech to the Head of States and Governments of the Non-aligned Movement).

challenges are not only painful but also continue unabated. Several suggestions towards resolving these challenges have been attempted. I continue in the next paragraph to discuss some of these challenges especially those made by Africa's visionaries and optimists.

### **3.7.2 Mandela's four point strategy for success**

In a speech to the assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, South Africa, in September 1998, Mr Mandela (1998) suggested all-important conditions conducive in the hope for an African Renaissance. Okumu (:146) reduces these to 'three main foundations' on which the hope for African Renaissance rests, namely, 1) the right timing, 2) strong leadership and 3) resources. It is evident from these three points that Mr Mandela's views will concur with some of the points discussed above under optimists and supporters of the renaissance movement. Let us briefly discuss these points and then reflect on them.

#### ***3.7.2.1 The right timing— End of the Cold War***

Okumu (:149) highlights in Mr Mandela's speech, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in 1989— demonstrated by the destruction of the Berlin Wall, as critical epochal events signifying a new period of hope. This meant the end to ideological warfare and as well as military stand-off which had led to many countries in Africa been drawn to opposing sides because of their support for either of the superpowers. This new atmosphere was perceived as opening up possibilities for trade and democracy along Western configurations resulting in prosperity and universal peace— a liberal dream of the nineteenth century (Skidelsky, in Okumu 2002:150). It is obvious that Mandela's vision of an opportune time depended on whether Africa's 'Big Men' and 'Strong Men' would equally awaken to the same realisation.

### 3.7.2.2 Strong Leadership

Okumu (2002:154) furthermore, finds in Mr Mandela's speech a strong sentiment of a need for good and strong leadership. This prompted Okumu to take a flashback on Mandela's predecessors who were visionaries, including Azikiwe and Nkrumah,<sup>32</sup> and pauses to herald Mr Mandela as the very same kind of leadership befitting the dream for a new Africa (Okumu 2002:157). Okumu proceeds to give a generous appraisal of Mr Mbeki who enjoys support of other powerful African leaders in his bid to foster the concept of an African Renaissance. He does this by looking at the content of several of his momentous speeches in relation with his initiatives both in South Africa and on the continent. In respect of Mr Mbeki, Okumu, then concludes by stating, "With his detailed and highly significant vision of a future Africa, Thabo Mbeki set the stage for African thinkers and intellectuals to translate these ideas into a pragmatic development program" (Okumu 2002:161). In my reading of Mr Mandela's speech I find exasperation at the kind of rampant leaders that continue to tear down their own countries through mismanagement, conflict and wars. Implicitly he decries the selfishness that bodes in most of these 'Big Men' and 'Strong Men' and consequent demise of the African hope in the face of the beckoning opportunities in the advent of a new world order<sup>33</sup> (Mandela 1998). Strong leadership therefore refers to leaders of integrity in the quest for a holistic reconstruction of communities at local, regional and global levels and who can provide credible and sustainable solutions to social, economic and political challenges in Africa.

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<sup>32</sup>Azikiwe is famous for his "Renascent Africa" call in 1938 and Nkrumah is known for his 'Black Renaissance's call in late 1950's and early 1960's.

<sup>33</sup>I use *new world order* in a liberal sense, notwithstanding the post-World War II developments in respect of pro-peace developments and Bretton Woods conference's promises (cf. <http://www.answers.com>).

### **3.7.2.3 *Natural Resources***

Okumu (2002:161) begins by highlighting the significance of Africa's problem in terms of space, namely, 'the world's second largest continent' and occupancy, a huge population (only surpassed by Asia and China). He takes a cursory look at the continent's vast natural resources which makes it an envy of other continents, to the extent that it earned itself the designation, the 'virgin' continent. Mr Mandela refers to Africa's resources in non-specific and broad terms. But his reference to resources he views them as a means in alleviating human suffering along the example and settings of the West. In light hereof, Mr Mandela poses a challenge that condemns an attitude among affluent African countries, in these words, "I believe we have a right to expect a quality of political leadership among those who are well-off, which rejects the concept of each for himself and the devil take the hindmost!" (Mandela, 1998). It is understandable therefore that Okumu in view of Africa declares that it "undoubtedly possesses potential in its land, rivers, water and mineral resources that can contribute to both an agricultural and an industrial revolution," (Okumu 2002:163). Given such potential he contends that the inhabitants of the continent would anticipate the political leadership that would forge policies that would "achieve economic growth and development spurred by the Renaissance movement" (Okumu 2002:163).

### **3.7.2.4 *Development and Peace — the twin factor***

In conclusion, I wish to go a bit further than Okumu's Mandela three-point solution of Africa by espousing the twin factor of 'development' and 'peace' that comes out strongly in Mr Mandela's speech. I have already discussed in a previous paragraph that peace is an indispensable factor in Africa's quest for rebirth. Mr Mandela, in almost all instances where 'peace' is not used as an adjective, tends to put 'peace' and 'development' as twin-factors. In this sense, therefore, 'peace' seems to prescribe an environment of incubation for development. Elsewhere he uses another word with a similar sense, namely, 'stability'. This too only helps to fortify 'peace' and

define the environment under which meaningful development can take place. Peace and stability, however, require the right framework of justice. Hence Mr Mandela couples peace, stability and development with the word 'just', for example, "a *just* end which addresses the interests of all the people of Sudan"; "towards a *just* and peaceful solution" referring to the Israel and Palestine stand off; "permanent and *just* peace throughout the Middle East". A range of conditions can be prescribed that complement peace as an essential element to development. For instance, democracy, requires elections that are conducted under 'free and fair' conditions, so that 'peace' that means 'absence of conflict' would not be enough, since oppressive laws and instruments (e.g. police and military forces) can create a seemingly peaceful condition, while fear and intimidation can determine the outcomes of the elections that do not reflect the will of the people.

In conclusion, a closer look at Mr Mandela's speech has revealed far-reaching implications that should dictate how we should also view the concept of African Renaissance. This point will later form part of the discussion under important pointers to missiological perspectives.

### **3.8 Critical status of important role players**

The state of all human beings is transitory. In this paragraph I look at undeniable fact that people, by nature, transit through different states of existence; the prominent feature being the passage from life to death. This brings to mind that the conceptualisation of an African Renaissance has lost great exponents such as Seme, Nkrumah, etc., through death. Other such transitory features may include ascendance to positions of authority, including presidency or leadership in own countries, continent or the world and vice versa. Another feature could be occupying a position of influence, perhaps in an intellectual sense, journalism, etc. I want to argue that the transitory nature of persons is a worrying factor for a movement as critical such as the African Renaissance. And finding satisfactory mitigating interventions to this would ensure unabated thrust towards the realisation of the



African Renaissance. To illustrate this point let me take three persons, one at the world's sphere of influence, another at a continental, regional and local (country) levels, both of whom have moved out of their influential portfolios, and lastly, another who had influence at all the three levels and has recently ended his term of office of authority, these being, namely, Mr Kofi Annan, Mr Olusegun Obasanjo and Mr Thabo Mbeki.

### 3.8.1 **Kofi Annan, former General Secretary of the United Nations**

This is not an exhaustive account of the man once at the helm of arguably one of the world's most powerful bodies. Mr Kofi Annan rose through the ranks of the United Nations (UN) over a period of seven years occupying important positions in the organisation's functional bodies. Annan worked as an Assistant Secretary-General in three consecutive positions: Human Resources Management and Security Coordinator, from 1987 to 1990; Program Planning, Budget and Finance, and Controller, from 1990 to 1992; and Peacekeeping Operations, from March 1993 to February 1994. This is besides his earlier involvement with the UN before he took a break at much lesser positions starting in 1962 to 1974. He occupied the all-important position of a General Secretary of the UN in 1997 and because of the confidence in him, was re-elected to a second five-year term in 2001 (answers.com/Kofi Annan 2008).

Annan's important role with regard to Africa can be summed up as follows: 1) *Poverty and food security*: While pursuing an ambitious plan of renewing the UN, he maintained an international commitment to Africa, (Answer.com/Black Biography). He thereby tried to sell to the affluent international community programs of poverty alleviation and food security, 2) *Democracy*: He promoted democracy. This he demonstrated, among others, by encouraging civil rule in Nigeria. Nigeria had then always been exchanged in the hands of military dictators. His recognition of human rights, the rights of women in democracy by referring to President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, civil rights movements through sustained protests against intransigent

leaders, points to his firm belief to world of democratic principles (Annan 2000)<sup>34</sup>; 3) *Peace and mediation*: Despite Annan's soft-spoken nature, a personality for which many of his critics had doubted his capacity to handle international conflicts, and his apparent failure to make a decisive and timely intervention on the occasion of the Rwandan genocide<sup>35</sup>, he proved beyond doubt to be a prolific peace-broker. His preference has been a policy of diplomacy over armed confrontation. Hence, in an address to the National Press Club, Annan declared: "If war is the failure of diplomacy, then ... diplomacy, both bilateral and multilateral, is our first line of defence. The world today spends billions preparing for war; shouldn't we spend a billion or two preparing for peace?" (Biographies 2010a). It does appear that with his election as a member of the Global Elders<sup>36</sup>, and his role in mediating a truce in Kenya's 2007 post-election conflict Annan's role of brokering peace in the world is bound to continue well into the future. It is noteworthy to say Annan is a Nobel peace laureate, and his importance to Africa cannot be underestimated.

### 3.8.2 **Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria**

Mr Obasanjo has recently left the office of presidency at the elections of April 2007 when a new president, namely, Umaru Yar'Adua<sup>37</sup> took the reins. Obasanjo has an

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<sup>34</sup> Annan, K. 2000. Africa's thirst for democracy, *International Herald Tribune*, 5 Dec at [www.un.org/News/ohsrp/stories/articleFull](http://www.un.org/News/ohsrp/stories/articleFull) accessed 31/05/2010.

<sup>35</sup> Gen. Dallaire (in Answer.com accessed 18/04/2008) asserts that Annan held back UN troops from intervening to settle the conflict, and from providing more logistical and material support and, in particular, he claims that Annan failed to provide any responses to his repeated faxes asking him for access to a weapons depository, something that could have helped defend the endangered Tutsis.

<sup>36</sup> The *Global Elders* or *The Elders* is a group of public figures noted as elder statesmen, peace activists, and human rights advocates. The goal of the group is to solve global problems, like climate change, HIV/AIDS, and poverty, and "use their political independence to help resolve some of the world's most intractable conflicts." *Wikipedia in Answer.com* (accessed 21/04/2008). It includes N Mandela, D Tutu, J Carter, and G Machel.

<sup>37</sup> Has since passed on in 5 May 2010 and was succeeded by acting-President Goodluck Jonathan (answers.com/ Umaru Yar'Adua accessed 30/05/2010).

illustrious background as an intellectual and prolific writer. He was involved in economic activities especially during his break from politics from 1975 to 1979. Obasanjo's esteem is described in the words of Jonathan Power in *The Los Angeles Times*: "Democracy, farming, and disarmament are Obasanjo's passions, and he has relentlessly promulgated them." (Biographies 2010c). These can be demonstrated by his move in 1974, when the Nigerian head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, declared that a return to civilian rule would be postponed indefinitely. Opposition to Gowon's rule grew.

In 1975 Obasanjo, along with Murtala Muhammed, led a bloodless coup that overthrew him. In 1979, after three years as Nigeria's leader, Obasanjo handed power to elected president Shehu Shagari. In doing so, he became the only military ruler in Nigeria's history to voluntarily step down in favour of a democratically-elected government. Later on he was back at the centre of controversy in the country's politics by presenting strong vocal opposition to Sani Abacha's military dictatorship in the early 1990s. Consequently Abacha jailed him in 1995 and was only released after Abacha's death in 1998. He became leader of the dominant People's Democratic Party and was elected president in 1999, ending 16 years of military rule. Obasanjo announced that he would fight corruption and improve the economy. These goals were, at best, only partially achieved. Nigeria's struggle with ethnic and religious strife never made it easy for him. He was re-elected in 2003; although the election was marred by vote rigging. Remarkable among his achievements with regard to Africa is his 1990 award for *Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger*.

Mr Obasanjo's commitment to the African Renaissance movement is without doubt commendable. He has, on some occasions, been placed alongside Mr Mbeki as exponents of the African Renaissance. Sue Cullinan (2002) of *Time* had this to say about the duo, "... Mbeki and Obasanjo signalled a commitment to pragmatism and international diplomacy over pan-Africanist sentiment. Both men have staked their reputations on building an African renaissance known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), trading promises of democracy and good governance in return for foreign investment". Such a profile despite its shady

moments<sup>38</sup> has in my mind made Mr Obasanjo an asset to the African Renaissance movement. The question that should be asked is, whether the African Renaissance movement can afford to lose persons of his calibre.

### 3.8.3 **Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa**

In previous paragraphs I have made it amply clear the unmistakable close association of Mr Thabo Mbeki and the African Renaissance movement. This paragraph only helps to galvanise this role, especially with the view of indispensable role and prospect of continuity in this role, or otherwise, the threat to the movement should this role be curtailed.

Mbeki has been a notable powerful figure in African politics, positioning South Africa as a regional powerbroker and also promoting the idea that African political conflicts should be solved by Africans. He headed the formation of both the “New Partnership for Africa's Development” (NEPAD) and the “African Union” (AU) and played influential roles in brokering peace deals in Rwanda, Burundi, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He saw African dependence on aid and foreign intervention as a major barrier to the continent being taken seriously in the world of economics and politics, and also saw structures such as NEPAD and the AU as part of a process in which Africa solves its own problems without relying on outside assistance (Answers.com/Thabo Mbeki)<sup>39</sup>.

Mr Mbeki's importance as much as his role in Africa could not be divorced from the status of South Africa in terms of its liberation history, its resources, technology, and the respect it has earned in many ways including the ‘miracle’ of a relatively peaceful political transition from the Apartheid era to the current democratic dispensation and

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<sup>38</sup>Some reports claim however that Obasanjo's political stint between 1975 and 1979 left a bitter taste in some sections of the population."Students and journalists remember his years in office as a time of repression and lack of tolerance," Barnaby Phillips wrote in the Daily Telegraph. (Answer.com accessed in 18/04/2008).

<sup>39</sup> (Answers.com/Thabo Mbeki accessed in 18/04/2008).

the 'magic' of the awesome former president Nelson Mandela. Crucial to this argument is that Mr Mbeki owned up to the concept of African Renaissance and almost achieving synonymity with the concept. It becomes extremely precarious to begin to imagine an African Renaissance that is devoid of Mr Mbeki. Having recognised this, Mr Mbeki term's as the President of South Africa is over. He has recently lost the influential position of presidency in his political party, the African National Congress. It is because of the internal party politics that he finally lost his position as the State President, under a cloud of accusations of abuse of power.

Mr Mbeki's future role in South African politics is beset with uncertainty. A further question would be whether he can continue to exert any influence in advancing the interests of the African Renaissance through its constituted structures from a weak political, at best, or no political position, at the worst. In all the three cases posed here above as examples, I have to deal with the question of their successors, otherwise we may continue in the cycle of hope and despair that has since started with the precursors of the African Renaissance as discussed above.

### **3.9 Any hope beyond the present African Renaissance cartel?**

The critical question is, "what are the prospects of successors of leaders cited following on the proponents of the African Renaissance?" Are they going to play along the vision of their predecessors, or are they in their own right going to map new paths that may be off on a tangent with their predecessors? The new UN General Secretary, Mr Ban Ki-moon has already revealed his agenda: "We have moved climate change up to top of the agenda, where it belongs; we cannot now let those who depend on us down," secretary-general as he told the UN general assembly<sup>40</sup>. I, therefore, wish to propose that the continuity of the African Renaissance should be sought in lasting vehicles that supersede the temporality of humanity's transient positions and life's spans. In this study I will have to search for such values and

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<sup>40</sup> Ban Ki-moon's speech on 15 February 2008 to the United Nations General Assembly ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org). Accessed 13/04/2008).

vehicles to matters that will ensure the longevity of the African Renaissance movement and all the good it stands for.

There is a glimmer of hope, though. Firstly, if the language that embraces the spirit of the African Renaissance expressed by a new crop of African leaders, for instance, President Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, is anything to go by, then there is light at the end of the tunnel. This hope could be coupled to the challenge of these leaders rising to position of influence and taking the baton left by African Renaissance movement's protagonists at the helm of African politics. If not, it should lie in their ability to lobby as many as possible of African leaders to embrace this spirit.

Secondly, a further ray of hope lies in the establishment of foundations established in the name of these major role players of the African Renaissance movement. For example, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation has been established with the main objective of raising and mentoring leadership imbued with the spirit of the African Renaissance. Alongside this important development, the University of South Africa has also launched a Thabo Mbeki Leadership Institute<sup>41</sup>, with the view to encourage research and development along the kind of concepts Mr Mbeki espouses in the African Renaissance ideals. There is an apparent partnership between these organisations. The hope is that they will inspire and help in the formation of new leaders who will embrace democratic values and possibly occupy the continental political centre stage.

### **3.10 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 3**

In this chapter the motivation for the call for an African Renaissance was made. This call comes in the wake of the state of the continent I have discussed in chapter two, as well as the positive indications emerging in many parts of the continent. I have also raised the worrying factor of 'losing' the main proponents of the African

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<sup>41</sup> The inaugural Thabo Mbeki Annual Lecture, on the topic, *Investing in Thought Leaders for Africa*, was hosted on 27 May 2010 at the University of South Africa. See [www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za) for aims and objectives of the institute.

Renaissance movement due to democratic political succession or ill-begotten deposition such as the one that has befallen Mr Thabo Mbeki. We, nevertheless, have seen encouraging signs of the mutation of the drive of upholding the spirit of the African Renaissance with the instituting of structures that will set forward the ideals of the movement as conceived by its proponents. But in all of these regrettably there seems not to be any indication of spirituality being accommodated in this journey towards a new Africa.

### **3.11 Some pointers to the Missiological dimension**

This chapter leaves me with great unease at the apparent neglect of spirituality by African leaders I have discussed above. Whether this is as a result of their philosophic stance that separates spirituality and secular issues (a dualism that was also propagated in South Africa by the Apartheid regime) it is neither clear nor declared. Hence, this is an important pointer for Missiology, namely, that any call and its motivation towards a 'rebirth' cannot make sense when 'spirit' or the lack of it, behind the call is unravelled and critically engaged using the Missiological 'tools'. Another pointer that stands out clear is the vulnerability of the African Renaissance as a movement that does have safeguards because it is politically conceived and politically propagated; and I have pointed out that political vehicles are volatile and unpredictable. What are the Missiological scaffoldings that can assist these unsteady situations and which can also infuse them with a character of resilience and sustainability? This question reinforces the relevance and the importance of this study.

As I progress towards the critical chapter of the Missiological dimension of the study on the African Renaissance there is yet one important aspect of the study that needs consideration, namely, the *context* of the African Renaissance. I have earlier indicated that, Missiology at Unisa takes context seriously. It is necessary that I discuss that next, before discussing conceptual and strategic interventions on Africa's problems, from a Missiological perspective. The next chapter therefore discusses the context of the African Renaissance.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4 THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapters I have discussed several important aspects of the background to the call for an African Renaissance. Most of these aspects were peripheral to the core issues of what African Renaissance is or should be understood to be. This chapter delves into the substance of the African Renaissance and asks pertinent questions relating to the heartbeat of this movement. It is in this chapter that I seek to establish the physical components of the movement in terms of its agents, institutions, and the infrastructure that have set the movement in motion. Since this is a scientific academic study it will be inadequate to merely give descriptions of these agents and structures. I will provide the theoretical framework on which these functional entities are based.

#### **4.2 Who determines the content of the African Renaissance?**

In addressing this question I presuppose that the African Renaissance spirit, conceptualisation and practical engineering are fomented by an interest group. This group through its networking gradually constructs and shape the direction the African Renaissance eventually takes. It is therefore critical to observe the noticeable forces that hover on the surface of the processes that are busy creating this movement. Furthermore, it is even more important to peer below the surface to establish the undercurrents the weave the substructures that are in the process of undergirding the movement. The following paragraphs try to figure out these 'agents' that are busy determining the content of the African Renaissance.



#### 4.2.1 The role of agents in the African Renaissance ‘dream’

It is important to ask who the “agents” are, and what purpose they serve in organisational structures, so that I can better appreciate their role in the renaissance movement. “Agency” is a concept used in philosophy and sociology to refer to the capacity of an agent to act in a world (Wikipedia 2010: Agency). In philosophy, when an agent acts in terms of human decision making it does so with an implicit duty to apply value judgments. Such decision making and resultant actions may then affect other people and the environment resulting in the need to view human agents as persons as entrusted with ‘moral agency’. Sociologically, ‘agency’ refers to this capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own value judgments, but when agents work with organisations or structures<sup>42</sup> they need to consider their actions against the possible impact they may have on other people and the environment (Wikipedia/Agency 2010). It is therefore important in this paragraph to consider “agents” in terms of the lasting effects their decisions and actions have under the envisaged African dream as embodied in the African Renaissance.

It is in the light of this understanding that I am motivated to find the ‘who’s who?’ in the dream for the African Renaissance. This, though, will be more of an exercise in modelling than ‘institutionalisation’ of specific persons. Persons who assume ‘Institutionalised’ stature tend to be viewed by their followers as indispensable. On the one hand, they impose on themselves lifetime titles or, on the other, have such titles thrust upon them by their admirers. Africa has had to its detriment a great deal of these human agents (cf. par. 3.6.2.1). It is often presumptuous when dealing with movements of the proportion that go beyond national boundaries, to think in terms of politicians as either worthy or appropriate. The question is, “What type of agents should we imagine as fulfilling the vision of the African Renaissance?”, or stated otherwise, “Does Africa need agents who irreplaceable?” This study seeks to find models of role players that can be considered as alternatives to the leaders perceived as ‘indispensable’ on continental issues. This argument advances the idea that it is in

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<sup>42</sup> In Sociology, “structure” refers to those factors (such as social class, but also religion, gender, ethnicity, subculture, etc.) which seem to limit or influence the opportunities that individual have” (Wikipedia/Agency, accessed 22/02/2010).

the nature of renaissance movements to find either active or latent many role players who should be recognised or encouraged to assume positions of leadership in the struggle for Africa's rebirth. In light here of, I propose in the next paragraphs, two categories of people, firstly, those who have attained recognition as already contributing to the African Renaissance *per se*, and secondly, those who may be acting on the margins or who have been sidelined in the process of the rebirth of Africa.

#### 4.2.2 The role of the Intelligentsia and academia in the African debate

The importance of intelligentsia and academia in fostering the ideals of the African Renaissance cannot be over-emphasised. These two categories of human activity are of the same nature in that they refer to those gifted with the capacity to think. However, in pursuing the specific roles they are expected to play, I find it necessary to express the critical differences that are apparent between these two categories. I will attempt to define the two concepts from a more general point of view as explained in dictionaries and then go into their deeper meanings as defined by select authors I have specifically nominated. It is Mamdani (in Makgoba, 1999:129-134) and Mulemfo (2005:44-48) who find reason to pay special attention to the importance and the role of African intelligentsia on the African Renaissance debate.

Let me begin by giving the meaning of the term *intelligentsia* from a general point of view. A less sophisticated dictionary meaning gives *intelligentsia* as simply, "the intellectual elite of a society" (answers.com/intelligentsia accessed on 10/11/08). For an elaborate meaning, Mulemfo (2005:44) defines *intelligentsia* as "those people ... who have the mental ability to cope with advanced ideas and are capable of serious independent thinking." Similarly, but in a rather qualified sense, Mamdani is impressed by the meaning of the concept as found in Russian culture. He says, "in the broad Russian sense, intelligentsia includes all those who drive forward creative thought and frame debate, whether in the arts or culture, whether philosophical or social thought." (Mamdani , in Makgoba 1999:130). Martin Malia (answer.com/intelligentsia) finds that historically, in the Russian use, the word has had two primary

overlapping uses, namely, all people who think independently called "critically thinking realists," or narrower meaning, "the intellectuals of the opposition, whether revolutionary or not." I find the characterisation of intelligentsia as 'independent thinkers' as critically important within the framework of African thought. It is Rene Descartes<sup>43</sup> who said "[because] I think, therefore I am". This individualistic stance when put against the African philosophic premise, "Because we are, therefore I am"<sup>44</sup> often creates tension as an 'African thought' is often a shared one and is accommodative of those served by the generation of such thoughts. Perhaps this is the reason why some critics find problem with African Renaissance in that it is apparently a private exercise of the thinking few.

Mamdani (in Makgoba, 1999:130), however, finds this as more complex than what meets the eye. He cites South Africa as a case in point, in that in the Apartheid era, the black intelligentsias were systemically eliminated by creating bipolar identities. As a product of colonialism the white intelligentsia was nurtured in white universities such that "they had intellectual freedom, but lacked social accountability"<sup>45</sup>. On the other hand, black universities were 'detention centres' for black intellectuals with little freedom and or institutional autonomy because of the 'heavy hand of bureaucracy', but were more socially responsive (Mamdani in Makgoba, 1999:131). Independent thinkers<sup>46</sup> are critical by nature. This 'ability' is often perceived as dissent or malicious ploy to undermine those to whom criticism is directed, how much more if they are in power. Mulemfo (2005:46) urges intellectuals to avoid at all cost becoming "yes-men or sycophants" to leadership. Directing his plight to Mr Mbeki, Mulemfo (2005:46) cautions that, "Mbeki needs to understand that inviting African intellectuals to the

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<sup>43</sup> Rene Descartes was a French philosopher who coined the words, '*cogito ergo sum*' in his Discourse on Method in 1637. ([answers.com/famous\\_quotes](http://answers.com/famous_quotes), accessed 05/01/2010, see also [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren\\_Descartes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ren_Descartes) accessed 07/09/2010).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. The use of the expression in Samuel Karimi and Robert Eschenauer's article entitled, *We Are Therefore I Am: A Psycho-Cosmos Counselling Model for Black Africans* ([www.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/adco](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/klu/adco) (accessed 05/01/2010)).

<sup>45</sup> Mamdani's argument is debatable as many were socially accountable to the white powers that be.

<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that many intellectuals active in opposition politics came from white liberal universities as opposed the ethnic ones. Those who in ethnic universities dared, were eliminated summarily eliminated, for example, Abram Tiro, at the University of the North (now Limpopo).

table means inviting criticisms that may be hard to hear.” This is a double-edged challenge facing the political leaders on the one side and the intellectuals on the other.

Unfortunately, all over Africa, the list of intellectuals who have disappeared without trace is endless and graves are fraught with those who had the guts to voice their criticism against colonial leadership. This terrible trend has continued even in the post-colonial era in the hands of African leaders. A well-known case is the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa<sup>47</sup> (and others) in 1995 at the hands of Nigeria’s military junta of General Sani Abacha ([Wikipedia/Ken Saro-Wiwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa))<sup>48</sup>. Heavy censorship of books and other literary works, as well as muffling and banning of both the print and electronic media still continues to the present time. This has been more evident in the cases of ‘strong -’ and ‘Big Men’. Closely related to the issue of intelligentsia is the case of the academia.

In the previous paragraph I have already made inferences that show that the issue of academia is closely related to that of the intelligentsia, in as much as they provide the faculty for in-depth thinking that should assist generation of ideas that are bound to create a dispensation of hope and relief from the ills confronting the continent. There are, however, critical differences. I have to explore these and try to understand with a view to suggesting a way forward. Let me ask, even in this case, what is or who are in the *academia*? “*Academia* is a collective term for the scientific and cultural community engaged in higher education and research, taken as a whole” (answers.com/academia: 2008). I do not intend to discuss elaborately the concept’s etymology, but I however wish to point out criticisms raised regarding this term.

Academia or academics, among others, are criticised for being irrelevant to the real issues on the ground. More often they are referred as ‘ivory towers’ (answers.com 10/11/08). If this criticism holds, then academia may not be helpful to the African Renaissance. But turning to Mamdani (in Makgoba, 1999:130), such criticism in

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<sup>47</sup> Ken Saro-Wiwa was an author, television producer, environmental activist, and a winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize.

<sup>48</sup> ([www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken\\_Saro-Wiwa](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-Wiwa) accessed 07/01/2010).

South Africa is a deliberate construct of the political dispensations. In posing a rhetoric question, “To what extent were apartheid-enforced identities voluntarily reproduced through a knowledge industry that included schools, technikons<sup>49</sup> and universities, newspapers and magazines, radio and television?”, Mamdani argues that whites, ‘with a studied conviction’, created and defended apartheid-enforced identities. Therefore, the academia or institutions of higher learning were turned into instruments of political ideology, in the case of whites, and centres of indoctrination and suppression of free thinking, in the case of blacks. Mamdani’s (in Makgoba, 1999:132) recommendation to change the situation in South Africa is one-worded, namely, “deracialise”. Another challenge facing both the intelligentsia and the academics that goes beyond autocratic and bureaucratic suppression is in the nature of their communication skills. Khoza (in Van Rensburg, 2007:16) indirectly decries this shortcoming by saying that, “the vision has not been translated into a language that is accessible and understandable to the masses of Africa. This runs the risk of the vision being regarded as a preoccupation of intellectuals and the elite”.

I believe it is in the light of the foregoing discussion that there is a need to have an established think-tank for and on the African Renaissance. Mamdani’s appeal is emphatic, “there is need for urgent action by state, but not only state, to create enabling conditions for the nurture of an Africa-focused intelligentsia” (in Makgoba, 1999:134). With such conducive conditions, there should come to being increased writings, creation of periodicals, and establishment of institutions, opening of websites, so that broad based debates and exchange of ideas can be fostered.

#### **4.2.3 The role of politicians and governments in the AR movement**

Politicians in the prototype renaissance played a tremendous role in providing space and resources for agents of the renaissance. I have already indicated in the previous chapter that many in the call for the African Renaissance are politicians of great influence, such as President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana in the past, Mr Mbeki

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<sup>49</sup> Currently called, “Universities of Technology”.

recently, and Mr Mandela. One important component politicians bring with them to the African Renaissance debate is the involvement of their governments. This thereby ensuring provision of necessary resources as shall be demonstrated under 'institutions', in the case of South Africa, especially because of Mr Mbeki's role from his seat as the president of this republic.

There seems to be symbiotic relationship between the most progressive African political leaders and the African Renaissance. Listening to many of their speeches, for example President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (2008)<sup>50</sup>, African Renaissance appears to be the kite they hoist to declare themselves as a new generation of political leaders who are breaking away from the shackles of a moribund Africa that lies pasted on its death bed because of the ills I have so abundantly expressed in the previous chapters. Conversely and equally valid, the African Renaissance needs progressive political leaders who are sensitive to the signs of the *kairos*<sup>51</sup> and can intuitively respond positively to its cue. "The need for quality leadership is emphasised in most books that analyse Africa's current status" says Van Rensburg (2007:32). Van Rensburg further notes that many African writers "are unforgiving in their criticism of leaders' appetite for power and self-interest" (Van Rensburg 2007:32). He correctly observes that, "it is one thing to lead a liberation struggle and another to lead a process of nation-building ... [Therefore Africans] require a different set of leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Van Rensburg, 2007:32). It is thus clear that there is a need to link African political leadership and the African Renaissance. This mutual dependence of the two seems to be the access code to economic politics of the UN, IMF, WB and the G8; to the cultural rise to the showpiece of Fifa, Olympics, and of other continental bodies; and to bi- and multilateral agreements of countries across the continents. It is no wonder that South Africa has become a great beneficiary of these transactions of trust.

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<sup>50</sup> President Johnson-Sirleaf at the 6<sup>th</sup> Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, on 12/06/2008, entitled her speech, "Behold the new Africa".

<sup>51</sup> Saayman (2008: 10-11) gives an elaborate implications of *kairos*' call to action.

South Africa's win of the bid for the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup and the subsequent visits by the body always required the government's strong affirmation in terms of providing funds to the construction of the stadiums and putting in place all other infrastructures. Most importantly, though, is the creation and strengthening of security facilities to ensure a safe environment for the hosting of the tournament remained the uncompromised point in the negotiations. The presence of the world's celebrated statesman, Mr Mandela, much as it was important and perhaps influential in winning South Africa the bid, would not be enough if the government position was lethargic and unconvincing. The promises on staging a successful soccer World Cup competition is directly linked or influenced by the content of the African Renaissance as having in-built structures and processes that inspire hope and trust.

#### **4.2.4 The role of the 'ordinary' people on the AR landscape**

In this section I address partners of the African Renaissance who are in many instances treated as if 'non-existent'. These are, for lack of a better word, 'ordinary' people, the 'common' people or the 'nonentity'. They are the faceless people on the landscape of the movement and have invariably a vital role to play, otherwise why should observers such as Khoza (in Van Rensburg, 2007: 16) demand that leaders should convey the African Renaissance vision in a manner that is "accessible and understandable to the masses of Africa". If there is talk that the African Renaissance should inspire hope, whose hope is it? Stated otherwise, who are the beneficiaries of the renaissance product? While it can be perceived that the African Renaissance dream will be a fountain with many tributaries, care should be taken that a share of its outcomes will benefit the person on the street and in the rural area. But the dream, much as there is general perception that it is being engineered by visionaries, the elite, cannot be denied that its success also critically hinges on the contribution of the African masses in many ways. Rightly speaking, the ordinary people should, therefore, not be only seen in terms of passive recipients of the

renaissance movement, but also important contributors. Mongane Wally Serote<sup>52</sup> (in Ernst 2002:159) elevates the place of 'ordinary people' to that of co-creators. Responding to a question to name "African thinkers" Serote declares,

Well, the key thinkers are going to be the ordinary people of this country [South Africa]. They are creators of African culture. If you talk about the seamstresses, you find them in the township and the rural areas. And when you talk about people who do beadwork, you find them here, woodcarving, those are the thinkers and intellectuals I am talking about, who are re-creating African concepts (in Ernst 2002:159)<sup>53</sup>.

The subject of 'ordinary people' can draw us into diverse areas of discussion. However, I wish to limit the discussion to a few crucial points as a means of illustrating the importance of 'ordinary people' in the African Renaissance debate. These areas I choose to discuss touch an important nerve in the web of the renaissance movement. These are, namely, lifestyle, attitudes and safety.

#### **4.2.4.1 Lifestyle**

The moral conduct of people can spell success or demise of even the most noble of ideas or visions. It should suffice to use the HIV/AIDS<sup>54</sup> pandemic as a strong point to contend with. When the scourge of the HIV/AIDS took off on the continent, the high rate of infection was blamed, rightly so, on ignorance. This was followed by numerous myths and misinformation which only aggravated the situation. In a short space of time infection statistics rocketed to levels that put Africa as the worst affected continent. My point has merited relevance in South Africa. In South Africa billions of Rands have so far been spent on awareness campaigns, using both print and

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<sup>52</sup> Serote (at this time of writing) was the convener of the South African Chapter of the African Renaissance in 2000, a national affiliate of the African Renaissance Institute.

<sup>53</sup> Note the title of this interview: *Ordinary people are the creators of African culture*.

<sup>54</sup> I am here not making a presentation on HIV/AIDS but use subject to illustrate how a prevalent *lifestyle* can make good plans miscarry. For a substantive discussion on HIV/AIDS see Kalipeni, E. *et al*. (ed.), 2004. *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond epidemiology*, Malden, Malden MA: Blackwell Pub.



electronic media, as well as campaigns in communities, institutions of health and education, through the agency of government, business, faith-based organisations, non-governmental organisations and volunteers in their private capacities. But high levels of sexual promiscuity fed by the entertainment industry that combined substance abuse and unbridled display of sexual life modelled by celebrities so tempting that any calls by moral agents simply fell on deaf ears.

South Africa HIV infection has until recently been on a disquieting rise. And presently the reckoning time has arrived as Aids related deaths is gradually leaving a wasteland of orphans, child-led families and over-burdened grandparents on family front and a seriously depleted labour market as the loss affects both professionals and non-professionals in the service and production sectors of the industry. The relevance of this grotesque picture on the African Renaissance, to mention only two areas, is, 1) at the level human resource: Many of the infected and the affected are people who should have a direct contribution into the economy of the African Renaissance movement in numerous capacities thinkable; 2) at the level of financial resource: Governments are spending a fortune to prevent and to battle the cause and effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is money that could be best utilised in many programs of development.

Therefore the challenge for the African Renaissance is seeing the ordinary people buy into values of the movement as carried in some of its vehicles, for example, the Moral Regeneration Movement. If people fail to heed the call to change lifestyle patterns, to take medication for diseases such TB, to take preventative and remedial actions against cholera, malaria infections, and other diseases; if people do not distinguish between fact and myth, reality and superstition, then the prophets of doom and sceptics should be exonerated, for indeed, there shall be no rebirth when there is no transformation in the mindset of people and when there is no rehabilitation in the lifestyle of the people.

#### 4.2.4.2 Attitudes

Attitudes are behavioural patterns informed by ingrained perceptions about things and people. Attitudes are generally rendered in the negative. They are formed from pieces of information about the target object and then continue to prescribe an action in response. Attitudes have been a critical element of identity, self-image and consciousness. Colonial regimes have been good in creating and packaging sets of attitudes by systematically creating identities and ascribing certain traits under the guise of anthropological and sociological characteristics. Mamdani's (in Makgoba, 1999:130) has adjudged this in the manner in which "the apartheid project enforced bipolar identities". These packages were subsequently the ownership of the respective communities. However, instead of them remaining merely identity differentials they created dispositions of 'otherness' against those in the 'unlike' camps. Depending on circumstances different camps either 'liked' or 'disliked' each other, 'loved' or 'hated' each other. It was malicious leaders who took advantage of these camps to create suspicion and at worst antipathy.

In South Africa segregation played out in forms of self-apathy and inferiority complex among Africans (cf. Biko in Burke)<sup>55</sup> and a feeling of love, sympathy and empathy for a white person, at the expense of own selves<sup>56</sup> Many observers wonder why in the recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa, whites or even light skinned people, let alone being attacked, were not even mentioned as possible targets of these attacks. This includes Chinese (who have recently been classified as blacks) and other people of oriental descent. It is common course that in most instances feelings of hostility are based on false rumours, ill-perceived threats, misconceptions or 'half-truths', although on the other hand some could be based on true fact. I return to the problem of

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<sup>55</sup> Burke, B. 2004. Steve Biko and informal education, *the encyclopaedia of informal education*, [www.infed.org/thinkers/biko.htm](http://www.infed.org/thinkers/biko.htm) accessed 05/01/2010).

<sup>56</sup> This is one of the objections to the film, *e'Lollipop* by Andre Pieterse on the scene where a black boy (played by Muntu Ndebele) faced by a potentially fatal threat of snowfall, takes off his blanket, his only covering, to warm a white boy and a friend (played by Norman Knox). Subsequently the black boy dies from exposure. ([www.elollipop.co.za/jannie-and-tsepo.php](http://www.elollipop.co.za/jannie-and-tsepo.php) accessed 05/01/2010).

xenophobia as manifested in South Africa recently<sup>57</sup> and want to advance it as an example in the renaissance debate.

How critical is this problem for the African Renaissance? The success of the African Renaissance depends on concerted efforts by all Africans both at the political leadership level and at the level of general public. For example, at the political level, Nigeria, referring to xenophobic attacks on its nationals, made it clear it would hold the South African government accountable, even to the extent of demanding compensation for loss and/or damage to lives and property of its citizens. At the level of general population threats were expressed that South African sports teams, especially Bafana-Bafana, South Africa's national soccer team, as well as known businesses of South Africans in several African states would be attacked or harmed in some way. This could be construed in many ways to even include economic sanction or boycott of products from South Africa. It could also harm travel and tourism. Serious levels of xenophobia could even drift into uprisings of genocides. A continental rebirth cannot thrive in an atmosphere determined by attitudes of conflict or strife and, therefore, attitudes should be right for conditions of renewal to thrive.

#### **4.2.4.3 Safety**

I want to state under the subject of safety that crime and corruption, specifically, are matters of great concern. Crime is a diverse and complex societal pathology. It is an agenda item for business, sports, education, tourism, and so many more, meetings. For South Africa and many other countries which do not experience heavy armed conflicts, crime prevention provides enough test of credibility to these governments. Law enforcement agents are stretched to the limit. But the situation could improve if it was not for the fact that crime provides fertile ground for corruption.

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<sup>57</sup> A study on xenophobia in South Africa was conducted by several organizations including Forced Migrations Studies Program at the University of Witwatersrand and an intensive report, *National Survey of the Refugee Reception and Status Determination System in South Africa* has resulted from their endeavours (cf. [www.migration.org.za](http://www.migration.org.za), accessed 05/01/2010)

It is self-evident that organised crime syndicates generate own sophisticated counter operations to crime prevention. They draw into their dirty system the rank and file of the law enforcement <sup>58</sup> and ordinary people. Ordinary people are even more vulnerable and the burden on ordinary people is even greater. Conditions of poverty have often been blamed for poor people playing accomplice to criminals. But this argument alone is not satisfactory when one considers how members of the middle-class are involved in acts of crime. In a further important argument I want to focus on the worrying phenomenon of the 'silent majority'. I call this a culture of silence. It occurs when people passively watch criminal activities without preventing or reporting these incidents to the police or crime-combating agents, where possible even before they take place.

There are possible reasons to explain this apparent indifference. I suggest among others, 1) fear of reprisal from criminals, 2) lack of confidence in crime fighting instruments of the government, due to various reasons including lack of capacity on the part of the police or their lack of policing ethos, 3) the mentality that saw, on the one hand, police during the apartheid era as part of the oppressive system and therefore enemies of the black people and, on the other hand, that saw offenders deserving concealment from the enemy of the people;<sup>59</sup> 4) in the same vein whites as custodians and beneficiaries of the apartheid system were treated likewise; 5) the lack of societal cohesion embedded in the *ubuntu*<sup>60</sup> philosophy. All this factored well to provide criminals a safe haven for their activities. The significance of such a compromised society to the African Renaissance is very clear in the demands of

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<sup>58</sup> Mr Jackie Selebi, the former Police Commissioner (the highest rank in the Safe and Security ministry) in South Africa, and the ex-chairman of Interpol (the International Policing body), is under investigation for complicity in corruption involving criminal elements.

<sup>59</sup> South Africans blacks were driven into this culture of silence during the anti-apartheid campaigns and those cooperating with the police were labeled 'informers' and either carried a bad name or suffered mob justice.

<sup>60</sup> *ubuntu*, as an ethic or humanist philosophy is defined, among others," as "people's allegiances and relations with each other" ([www.answer.com/topic/ubuntu-philosophy](http://www.answer.com/topic/ubuntu-philosophy)). A traditional SOS village call, '*Sebata-kgomo!*' (a Sepedi (language) expression for 'a lion') in the face of a community threat (such as a lion) literally moved all men to action, to hunt the intruder until found and eliminated (cf. similar use in Molapo, Rachidi R. 1997. A source of Inspiration, *South African Historical Journal*, 37:1, 218-219).

international communities and institutions who want to place their personnel and fortunes in African countries. Hence, leading to the 2010 soccer spectacular tournament, Fifa will continue to seek South Africa's reassurance that visitors to this country during the tournament will be safe. This is one non-negotiable prerequisite for the bid and the actual showcase.

While South Africa occupies an important part in confidence index of the international observers, for a program of African Renaissance's magnitude it will not be convincing enough for the international community to wholly buy into the renaissance euphoria.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the overall picture of the continent should be such that it there is substantial evidence that it is safe for investments, travel and tourism, as well as hosting big meetings, in respect of African states between themselves and in respect of other big global role players outside the continent. On the ground, in the remote parts of the countries, in the forlorn streets of townships and villages, in the secrecy of apartments, on the beaches, in the quiet of the wild life, in the most vulnerable places, away from 'the hand of law', far away from security's 'electronic eye' and the shriek of the alarm system, just there in the presence of 'ordinary people' a renewed land should assure a sense of security only the ordinary person can provide.

#### 4.2.5 **The influence of institutions on the African Renaissance project?**

Institutions can be defined as established entities or activities in society comprising rule-bound and standard behaviour patterns. They include any enduring activity or organisation (e.g. the family, education system, law, polity, economy or religion) which address some important and persistent societal problem (answer.com/institutions: 2010). The importance of institutions is that they are visible; they provide an address and reference point for contact and accessibility. As permanent structures, institutions have the potential to: 1) be custodians of the vision and mission of the movement; 2) to house agents and their operational instruments of information, outreach and impartation of the movement's ideals.

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<sup>61</sup> An English idiom here is relevant, "One swallow does not make a summer".

Since institutions play an important role in directing movements and changing the course of history it would be desirable to look at such roles with the view to the African Renaissance. However, in discussing institutions in this study I will do so broadly looking at their significance in relation to the African Renaissance, and not as independent entities. This, therefore, means our discussion will be cursory highlighting those roles that make them important determinants of this transformation movement.

Historically, the need for structures is evident in several institutions on the global scene such as, the UN (United Nations), WTO (World Trade Organisation), EU (European Union) and on the African soil, the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) and later the AU (African Union), and in relation to the African Renaissance, namely, PAP (Pan-African Parliament) and NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), to mention just a few. Several regional structural formations in Africa are further evidence to this point. The most effective of these have been SADC (Southern African Development Community), COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa States) and ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) to name a few among others. An appraisal of these bodies demonstrates how important cooperation is between African states. The establishment of Africa's continental organisations is a development that was long conceived under a pan-African dream. It is a dream that would see a united and seamless Africa, with a peculiar character, in competition with other global states on an equal economic and cultural plane. In the same vein, the African Renaissance drive found necessary to have organisations that would speak to the ideals of the movement: I will only mention three of the most important ones, just to illustrate the point:

- ***African Renaissance Institute (ARI)***

The African Renaissance Institute was the initiative of few African intellectuals and strategists who wanted to change the course of the continent's destiny in the third millennium. This body, which was originally called the Institute for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development, was formally established in August 1998 at Gaborone

Botswana, and had since then had its operations based there. The purpose of this organization is captured in its mission statement as follows:

Establishing the most effective way of mobilizing and networking Africa's human resources, intellectual wealth, and enterprise for an African Renaissance in the third millennium. It is designed to serve as a vehicle for African thinkers, researchers, and development workers in all walks of life, across barriers of language, religion, and geographical borders, who are motivated by the quest for Africa's survival, recovery, and sustainable development. The ARI has been established to fully capture the visions, aspirations, creative endeavours and spirit of the African Youth, Woman and Man (Okumu 2002:268)

The mission of this institute covers a broad spectrum of intellectual and practical activities that aim at enhancing and spanning together energies and resources of the African stakeholders, friends of Africa and Africans in Diaspora. African Renaissance is then the philosophic concept that gives meaning to the objectives the institute pursues.

- ***New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)***

This institution was established in October 2001 after several strategic meetings which saw the original name, *Millennium African Recovery Program* (MAP) founded in September 2000, and then changing to *New African Initiative* (NAI) in the course of 2001. This was a collaborative development in which other international bodies encouraged as well as played a supportive role to the initiatives of the concerned African leaders. For instance, the United Nation's Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) adopted a program which would relate to and play an enabling role to the MAP (Okumu, 2002:239). NEPAD would however operate hand in glove with African Renaissance Institute which was "well placed to work with African governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, development institutions, both national and international, as well as the private sector (:240) in terms of its constitution and objectives. In the final analysis, Okumu (2002:240-242) sees the success of NEPAD

hinging on three objectives, 1) the willingness of high-income nations to open their markets, especially agriculture and manufacturing, to African products and agreeing to cancel the debts of low-income African countries; 2) the willingness of the countries in the European Union, Japan and the United States of America to support agricultural developments in Africa, especially in the light of their advantaged position as a result of enormous state subsidies their farming communities enjoy; and 3) that in return to the above-mentioned points, African countries be willing to submit to the ideals good governance, democracy, human rights, peace, rule of law, end of violent conflicts, combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases, to name but a few of the most notable ones.

- ***Pan African Parliament and African Peer Review Mechanism***

Two of the most important organizations that serve under the banner of the African Renaissance and correlate closely because of their objectives are the Pan African Parliament and the African Peer Review Mechanism. A brief overview of these two bodies follows:

- *Pan African Parliament (PAP)*

The origins of the PAP can be traced to the Treaty of Abujah of 1991, which was followed by the Sirte Declaration of 1994, in Sirte, Lybia, where the Heads of States agreed on “speedy establishment of the institutions” which provided for the establishment of the African Economic Community including the Pan African Parliament. A few more meetings<sup>62</sup> finally saw the inaugural session of the parliament taking place in March 2004, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The seat of the parliament was later moved to Midrand, South Africa, where it is still based. In its website, PAP makes the claim that, “The establishment of the Pan-African Parliament is one giant step forward in ensuring that this deliberative continental body, once operational, will act as a common platform for all the peoples of Africa and their grassroots organisations to get more

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<sup>62</sup> One in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17th to 21st April, 2000 convened by the Secretary-General of the OAU; another in Lome, Togo from 10th to 12th July, 2000, which was an Assembly of Heads of States and the Government of the OAU.



involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges which beset Africa” (PAPA 2010).

- *The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)*

This is not another institution rather a system introduced by the African Union to help countries improve their governance in mind. Participation in the system is voluntary and the process has several role players such as, among others, NEPAD, Quality Assurance Agencies, and Research Partners, but is overseen by a Panel of Eminent Persons nominated by the APRM secretariat (APRM 2010).

A closer look at these two bodies should tell us that Africa hereby takes the problem of governance along democratic lines seriously. It is the willful submission to the scrutiny of the APRM that promising signs towards democratic principles will be evident. South Africa has already volunteered to be placed under assessment, which is an encouraging move. The question is how many more of the AU countries will follow this example. These two structures and other institutions, if successful in their mission and objectives, can be used by African states to bargain strongly with other international institutions of power. Conversely, the failure of these bodies or their decline to participate would send a bad signal to international interest groups.

#### **4.2.6 The role of external nations on the African Renaissance dream**

The debate on Africa’s capability to exclusively run its own affairs has been on especially since the post-colonial era started in the 1960s. Mulemfo (2007:78) argues against a popular belief that many Africans “have been made to believe that they are not capable of bringing holistic development to Africa on their own.” Thus he follows up with a thinking of an ideal situation where Africa fashions its own home-brewed solutions. In fact, there are many Africans who shun what they see as interference by ‘outsiders’ when other nations get involved in the affairs of the continent. On the contrary, I argue that Africa cannot escape the scrutiny and influence of other external nations. The era of globalisation is upon us as Africans. For various reasons

we are called to interact with other countries and organisations of the world and these have their own demands on Africans. For instance, the choices governments make between economic systems ultimately determine the extent to which their states will be open to external influence. Lesufi (2006:12-15) for argument sake, explains how capitalist economies create a necessity for exchange with other 'external' states. This is a condition that arises from the movement of three elements, namely, production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. As by product of this system, there is decreased role of the government in the economy as privatisation becomes a profitable option. He says many states after World War II operated as what came to be known as "Social Democracy or the Welfare state or Keynesianism" (Lesufi 2006:14) but this was found by many as an obstacle to profitability. But once a capitalist system kicks it leads to trade liberalisation. Hence, "liberalised financial markets make it possible for capitalists to move their money in and out of countries with ease in line with their profit consideration" (Lesufi 2006:15). It is because of these market systems on the one hand and other natural factors (e.g. drought, floods, etc.) on the other, that many countries of Africa are highly indebted to countries outside Africa and the financial institutions of the world and struggle terribly under their debt baggage. These countries over a period are compelled to seek debt relief from these financial institutions. The latter then make certain requirements and precisely use debt load on African states as lever to manipulate them into conditions they find themselves reluctantly obliged to honour. For instance, as a positive incentive many countries have been 'asked' to hold democratic elections or to adopt certain fiscal policies or even market systems that the debtors prescribe. However, other reasons are purely political. For example, countries that harbour 'freedom fighters' or 'terrorist organisation' are placed under severe diplomatic pressure including economic sanction of variable degrees to extort decisions that favour their counterparts. For instance, Libya, after enormous economic and political sanctions finally gave in to the demands of the Western countries including turning in suspects of Lockerbie bombing and agreeing to compensate families of the victims. Mr. Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe, never failed to condemn the Heads of States of Britain and United States of America, Mr. Brown and Mr. Bush, respectively. He accused them of having attempted to perpetuate colonial rule on Zimbabwe. While he

resists external pressure, his own country has been on a sharp decline precipitating hunger, poverty and outcry for external intervention by its citizens. The targeting of individual African countries has subsequently found way into continental political expression in the establishment of the AU. It will be observed that Africa established corresponding organisations to those of other continents, especially in the West, so that they may have Agendas that speak to each other. One process that is gradually taking root is China's 'unconditional' lending of financial aid and establishment of reconstruction projects. The worrying factor about this act of benevolence by many observers is what the 'catch' may be in all this. There are fears of what 'payback time' will bring with it. These fears may not be unfounded when I consider China's bad record on 'human rights' table, the closing of factories in many countries because they cannot compete with China's relatively cheap products and the possible mass emigration of its people from its highly populated country. But this case only helps to demonstrate further Africa's susceptibility to external countries and continents.

It is, therefore, clearly evident that the African Renaissance cannot be a solo African business. Already there is extensive intertwinement of interests that make it impossible for Africa to extricate itself from other continents. It there calls for African to formulate an internal policy with a common front for an external policy that will alleviate the continent from its 'enslaving' past and set it on a firm footing in whatever exchange with other countries of the world.

### **4.3 What determines the Content of the African Renaissance?**

#### **4.3.1 An introduction**

There is a general assumption that institutions and movements are established to serve a purpose. The renaissance movements have also been found to have had profound circumstances and compelling reasons leading to their existences. As for the prototype renaissance, Magubane (in Makgoba 1999:13-18) describes 'unsettled social conditions' as major contributing factors towards Europe's great awakening period. In this paragraph, I will explore possible motivations for the start of the African Renaissance. In the exercise thereto I need to place the contents of chapter 2, on the

state of Africa at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at the back of our minds. As I do that I need to ask a few questions regarding the birth of the African Renaissance, which will also serve as points for discussion in this section: Does the African Renaissance arise out of a specific need facing the continent?; Is there a pursuit of an ideology of some kind?; Is there policy or program that underpins the calling for the movement?; Is there outburst of a revivalist spirit, based on an iconic past?; Or is the African Renaissance simply propelled by novelty or itch of self-seeking glory by those at the helm of the movement? The next paragraphs will try to address these questions as a necessary pre-emptive step to the discussion on the content of the African Renaissance.

#### 4.3.2 **The needs hypothesis**

A popular proverb goes, “Necessity is the mother of invention”. As I have indicated in the previous paragraph that the European renaissance was, in part, predicated by abject conditions of need and misery. It was in the aftermath of these gruelling conditions that great inventions came to being. I have already highlighted that Africa in this new century has serious challenges of food shortage, health compromised by pandemic and incurable diseases, natural disasters and much more. Talbot (in Moyo, 2007: 127) paints a gloomy picture about the current situation in Africa, going forward into the foreseeable future. She forcefully argues to dispel what she sees as deceptive messages by some about the improving conditions in Africa, and declares, that:

Some 200 million people in Sub Saharan Africa face hunger, a 20 percent increase over the last ten years. It is estimated that by 2020, one fifth of the agricultural workforce in Southern Africa will have been claimed by HIV/AIDS. Nine out of ten Africans who need treatment for AIDS are still not receiving medication. The Sahel region, Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, East Africa, and the Republic of Congo all face food emergencies. Conflicts still persist in many parts of Africa including Darfur. These wars, disasters, diseases, and famine affect the lives of millions of Africans (Talbot, in Moyo, 2007:128).

These conditions 'create' a serious situation of basic 'needs'. In psychology, Abraham Maslow developed a theory of 'hierarchy of needs'<sup>63</sup>. He contends that needs vary from one person to another, and are dependent on the degrees of vantage as prescribed by those conditions people find themselves in. At the lowest rank of the pyramid of needs, Maslow, suggests that human beings have basic needs and these include air, water, food, clothing, shelter, sex, sleep, excretion and homeostasis (Globler, Wörnich, *et al* 2006: 217)<sup>64</sup>. Some of these fundamental needs were underlined by the current South Africa's ruling party African National Congress (ANC) in its political blueprint called the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). Because the RDP document addressed the core and basic issues affecting the previously disadvantaged communities, who are in the majority, the program became popular, such that the abbreviation, RDP, was soon bandied around, naming almost everything that meant 'alleviation from condition of need or destitute'. It is in the same light that African Renaissance seems to sound to many expectant Africans under conditions of need. Granted that 'need' is the condition for an African Renaissance program, then the African Renaissance will be judged by its ability to address the conditions of destitute on the continent. But there is more to the problem than just meeting the needs of the people. There are also issues of ideology, policy and related factors.

#### 4.3.3 The importance of policy-making

Our reading of African politics in the preceding paragraphs has indicated that even with countries that are (or were) agriculturally rich (e.g. Zimbabwe) or rich with minerals (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo), programs that aim to address basic needs of the people will not be enough. There are many overriding factors including those of governance, policy, international cooperation, and other macro-economics,

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<sup>63</sup> Maslow suggests that there are five levels of motivational needs in an ascending order of importance, viz., 1) physiological, 2) safety, 3) social, 4) esteem and 5) self-actualisation. Only unsatisfied needs are motivators; once a need is satisfied, the next level of needs emerges as a motivator.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. also [www.answers.com/topic/maslow-s-hierarchy-of-needs](http://www.answers.com/topic/maslow-s-hierarchy-of-needs) accessed 11/01/2010.

which present stumbling blocks in the redress of the plight of the people. Several critics of the renaissance dream address their skepticism on many issues that require sound policy and its execution to effect transformation. Therefore, by ‘policy’ I refer to all matters of principle that include constitutionality, its application and other related factors. A *constitution* as a set of laws that regulate practice is informed by an ideological framework. Many Africans are wary of ideological systems that are property of the West<sup>65</sup> and have the potential to perpetuate subservience in the interest of the West.

There is, therefore, an appeal for an ideological and operational framework that is relevant and compatible to Africa’s Indigenous Knowledge Systems and that best serves Africa’s interests. Out of these ‘home-brewed’ ideas, it is hoped, there shall flow programs that will not be self-inflicting to Africa’s unique requirements but that will not only be relevant, but will also be user-friendly. President Mugabe of Zimbabwe is on record for refusing to accept genetically modified (GM) seeds<sup>66</sup>. His objection touches on many controversial macro political economic issues, a subject that I may not satisfactorily address here.

#### 4.3.4 **The spirit and fact of Africa’s iconic past**

Nothing describes best the glory of the past than the words of Mr Nelson Mandela (in Makgoba 1999:11) which depict “the ruins of the African city of Carthage, the remains of the pyramids of Egypt, the sculptures of the ancient Ghana and Mali and Benin, the temples of Ethiopia and the Great Zimbabwe ruins” . These phenomenal structures imagined against the age in which they were constructed can only inspire awe and respect for their creators. It moves us to inquire deeper into their mindset and how

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<sup>65</sup> The West here refers to Western Europe, the United States and other countries of European settlement (cf. [www.answers.com/the-West](http://www.answers.com/the-West) accessed 06/01/2010).

<sup>66</sup> There is expressed fear of contamination by these modified seeds with serious consequences for environmental bio-diversity, economic and trade concerns, etc. For further debate on GM foods read, e.g., “Situation Report: Genetically Modified foods in the African context: Behind the smokescreen of the current debate” ([www.iss.co.za/af/current/GMOReportASAP.html](http://www.iss.co.za/af/current/GMOReportASAP.html) accessed 06/01/2010).

they figured out such huge projects within the means and technology of their times. It is this mindset that, in my view, can ignite the enthusiasm of our age to want to do likewise and even to do exceedingly well, given the resources at our disposal.

A few issues come to mind when I look at the spirit behind these acts of the past: 1) the conquering spirit: The warriors of “Hintsa, Sekhukhune, Cetshwayo ...” (see Mbeki’s poem above)<sup>67</sup> and valiance of Shaka, the Zulu king. This is the spirit that seeks to travel beyond its own horizons in the quest of subjecting the unknown under its own domain. I nevertheless wish to qualify the glorification of such a spirit. For our time, and for the purposes of the African Renaissance, it should be a benevolent spirit that goes out to do good to humanity and nature. 2) The spirit that thinks big. The gigantic spirit that fomented the Egyptian pyramids, the Great Zimbabwean ruins, is the spirit that depicts great architectural mindset. It is this spirit that is not satisfied to settle for the little, but configures in the mind things ‘larger than life’ and projects that were never conceived before. I nevertheless need to qualify this spirit. It is known in history, unfortunately, that such huge projects were carried out largely with the use of slaves.

Therefore, for our time and for the purposes of the African Renaissance it should be as well a humane spirit that serves humanity rather than hurt it. If in the renewal movement people can model their aspirations on things inconceivably larger than their problems, their limitations and/or fears, then I am convinced that their determinants for renewal will not be confined by visual impediments but by dreams and visions that have only made great nations the success they are today.

#### 4.3.5 **Novelty and self-seeking glory**

There is a tendency in the coming to being of new things, in inventions and discoveries to find elements of a quest for novelty and self-seeking glory. This tendency is accompanied by the rush to erect own statues and monuments. Whilst

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<sup>67</sup> Mbeki, T. 1996. *I am an African*. Speech on the occasion of adoption of The RSA Constitutional Bill, on May 8.

these are innocent in themselves, as long as they do not lead to deification of the concerned they may serve as inspiration for future generations. However, where the spirit of novelty and self-glorification is concerned it breeds apathy and resistance. The sacrilege, mutilation and destruction of statues that follow after the fall of a regime or government often comes as a result of bad feeling about those these 'statues' seek to elevate<sup>68</sup> (cf. Butler 1996). If people perceive in a new movement characteristics of a personal agenda and self-interest, there will be a general reluctance to play along. What will determine the success of the African Renaissance is when people see their own pain and cares reflected in the conception of ideas, verbalised objectives, tabled blueprints and the execution of these ideals of the movement. With these considerations in mind I can begin to engage the core issues at the heart of the African Renaissance.

#### **4.4 Preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 4**

I have in chapter four, presented the context within the African Renaissance can be viewed. Of great importance was to look at the key role players, structures and functionaries loaded with the responsibility of turning the African dream into a reality. I also recognised how African Renaissance strategists are neglecting critical potential role players such as the ordinary people. This study's importance, therefore, is in pointing out these seemingly obvious and/or obscure omissions. This chapter was not only about persons and structures, but also conceptual and behavioural considerations that may positively or negatively impact on the outcomes of the African Renaissance movement. I have consequently succeeded to place the index finger on the pulse of these matters that if not attended to we will indeed wake up disappointingly to a *de facto* dream. This chapter has once again confirmed our enduring contention, namely that the African Renaissance as presently conceived has no room for spiritual matters, neither in its philosophic framework nor in its structural makeup of partnerships.

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<sup>68</sup> e.g., in South Africa, ex-Prime Minister and the architect of the Apartheid policy, Hendrik Verwoerd's 20 foot statue was pulled down by Africans (Butler 1996. Democratizing Heritage: The South African Challenge, *Southern Africa Report* 11:3 (April 1996) p.30.



#### 4.5 Pointers to the Missiological dimension

Missiology is a study that is embedded in the *praxis* of Missions. Missions as a movement it is as old as the church and has over the centuries gained enormous experience about which I am saying in this study, the African Renaissance think tank should learn. Looking forward, therefore, to the chapter on Missiological dimension as a contribution to the African Renaissance's quest for success, I wish to ask the following questions: How are roles of *agents* in Missiology conceived, whether they be ordinary people or specialised people or corporate bodies? How should contexts in which agents are called to bring about change be analysed and what effective tools and processes should the Missional enterprise engage to arrive at sound solutions through planning and execution. By discussing these questions, the African Renaissance may begin to 'learn' from these experiences and plan for transformative role borrowing from the Missiological lifelong learning experiences.

To arrive at the point of dialogue between the African Renaissance movement and Missiology, I need to create an understanding of what Missiology is about with special reference to its status, legitimacy and profile as *rebirth* compliant *strategist*. The next chapter therefore will give perspectives of a Missiological challenge and its validity in the sphere of transformation agents.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5 DIMENSIONS OF A MISSIOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

#### 5.1 An introduction

In the preceding discussions, I have stated how the African Renaissance was conceived and for decades laid latent until it surfaced strongly towards the end of the previous century. I also pointed to how the proponents of this movement, noticeably a class of intellectuals, politicians, bureaucrats and economists, struggled with popularising the concept and succeeded in placing it on front pages of the electronic and print media. I also impressed on the cloud of controversy by skeptics who label it, at best, a 'dream'. There has also occurred in this recent period a rise in research based essays and books. An overview of the readings of these writings produces a disconcerting 'silence' in perspectives that present a chapter on the religious take of the African Renaissance. By labelling this deficiency a 'silence' is a relativised observation I make in comparison to the extent to which faith based contribution plays to this renaissance debate. Notwithstanding, a few writings on the religious perspective have already seen light and I will briefly make reference to that in the next paragraph.

#### 5.2 Breaking the silence

In the noteworthy academic writings and articles made on the topic of the African Renaissance, only but a few discuss it from a religious perspective. These include, 1) a master's dissertation of Ramasamy (2004) which discusses and evaluates the African Renaissance in the light of Christian values of love, justice, compassion and integrity and then challenges Christians, especially Evangelical-Pentecostals, to contribute towards the realisation of the African Renaissance; 2) Tshaka (2007) who in an article which challenges the denominational position the Reformed Churches in South Africa have adopted about their Africanness, cultural disposition and Reformed faith, and the need to integrate these elements into their faith practice, with the view

to introducing “African reformation as the religious component for African Renaissance” (Tshaka 2007:5). These two contributions are among the few from a Christian perspective on this subject. From other religious quarters are the writings of JA Naudé (1998) giving an Islamic perspective to the African Renaissance and WD Hammond-Tooke (1998), giving an African religious perspective. In other sources religion is mentioned rather scantily and in passing. One of the most presentable books on the African Renaissance is by Okumu (2002). Okumu (2002: 259) recognises the important role religion can and should play in a sub-section he terms ‘bringing about an African Renaissance’ by stating that, “The history of Western civilizations has shown that the role of churches and other religious groups in the translation of Renaissance arts developments into science and technology development, and then into political, economic, business and social life of nations, should not be underestimated” (Okumu 2002: 261). This observation is important for whoever enters the African Renaissance discourse. Certainly Okumu’s point is not farfetched when I consider the European Renaissance<sup>69</sup>. The argument can be advanced that the European Renaissance happened within the Christendom or thoroughly religious and christianised nations. Can the same be said of Africa or African communities? Okumu advances his point further by saying:

It is vital that Christianity, Islam and other religions and ideological belief systems provide the foundation of a strong quasi-political movement emphasising personal integrity and purity, both in work and family life, as this is ultimately the only driving force capable of delivering the cultural context required for an African Renaissance. The role of churches and religious leaders is crucial; rather it should be supported by politicians. *Changes in self perception and self-confidence flow from religious and ideological beliefs and are the key to all that follows* (Emphasis mine) (Okumu, 2004:261).

The irony in Okumu’s important observation is that, like many other observers, his arguments are rather casual and the mention of church and its role in the African Renaissance appear in only three pages of the whole book. This only helps to

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. [www.cohs.com/teachers/docs](http://www.cohs.com/teachers/docs) accessed 11/01/2010.

highlight the space accorded religion and the church in particular, on the Renaissance playfield. The question may be: Am I here in this argumentation overplaying the importance of religion, and indeed in Africa, for the cause of the African Renaissance? Let me then discuss the significance of religion in Africa, and then of Missiology in particular. Prior to embarking on that, though, religion and Christianity in particular, like a temple priest (cf. Lev.4:3<sup>70</sup>, see also 1 Joh.1:8) should first confess their shortcomings lest it they be accused of entering the renaissance arena on a high moral horse, despite their blemished colonial past. Saayman (1990:104-108) discusses this as a problem that arises mainly as a result of church traditions. He presents the “gulf” between the ecumenical and the liberationist groups who lean more towards “the social, political and economical, but from a very strong spiritual and biblical base. The evangelical group will be preoccupied with conversion and salvation, but not with the total exclusion of the socio-political” (Saayman 1990:108). The church traditions as well as of other faith formations have had their share in complicating the image of religion in the face of observers of all kinds. It is out of recognition of the ambiguous nature of religion that I discuss in the next paragraph the contrasts colouring religion’s public image.

### **5.3 The irony of religion**

In this paragraph, as I advance the subject of religion, in particular of Christianity, I do so with a great sense of contrition (see Bosch 1991:7). This contrition is inspired by the long history of misery and destruction that religion as both a human and a divine factor has caused human life, communities and nations (as will be discussed here below). Of notable aversion was in the area of natural sciences where religion has become unpopular for doctrinal intransigence, for example, in the case of Galileo<sup>71</sup>. A few other relevant examples of what I mean by this admission of dubious nature of religion can be cited as follows, and these do not go too far back in memory:

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<sup>70</sup> Le 4:3 ‘If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed’.

<sup>71</sup> The torture of Galileo on the findings that the earth moves relative to the sun which is fixed is a typical example (<http://freethought.mbdojo.com/galileo.htm> accessed 11/01/2010).

### 5.3.1 South Africa and the Apartheid dispensation:

In briefly recalling the South African history, in 1948 the political scene of South Africa changed critically when the Nationalist Party government came into power through elections of a minority white population. To entrench privileges for whites, this regime introduced infamous laws which came to be known as Apartheid laws. These laws basically denied blacks citizenship rights. The irony was that blacks were not only in the majority, but were also legitimate natives of South Africa. Some white churches condoned the *status quo* while others consecrated these laws as Biblical and therefore as the will of God (cf. Banda 1996: 51-52). Towards the closing years of the Apartheid era, the *Kairos Document* (1985), exposed the critical nature of theology in South Africa, and therefore of the influential Christian representation as a flawed belief system. Consequently many perceived Christianity as playing a major role in legitimising oppression on the basis of race, gender, and culture, among others. It recognized forms of Christian understanding which could be labelled as “state theology” and “church theology” (cf. Kairos Document 1985: Chapters 2 and 3). These understandings were construed to advance and internalise the apartheid system as divine will. There were, however, on the contrary other theological discourses presented a contrasting view to these. These discourses which included Black Theology and Liberation Theology, argued that advocates of ‘state’ and ‘church’ theologies were collaborating with oppressive forces to impose the apartheid hegemony on unsuspecting Christians. They challenged them as fallacies and human constructs which were bent on favouring a select White minority whilst marginalising the Black majority. Black Theology and Liberation theology, presented Biblical models for political freedom and sensitised the oppressed towards a new sense of self-respect and dignity, and sharpened the resolve to fight for their human rights and total freedom. (cf. Kritzinger, JNJ, in Banda 2010:8). Notable Biblical figures such as Moses and Jesus Christ were decked with characteristics and features of freedom fighters.

I sketch this picture to illustrate the point that, if religion has to present itself as co-operative in the rebirth of Africa, it has first to admit its short-comings as an imperfect but nevertheless a well-meaning force in the course of goodwill. I caution that it

should not act like Moses who, in the face of accusation of complicity in wrong-doing, shied away and fled into oblivion (cf. Exodus 2:11-15). It must recognise that it has assumed an inseparable part with the fate of the people and that it is imbued with undeniable power to act as an agent of hope, especially for the African people.

### 5.3.2 **Rwandan Genocide: an indictment against the church**

In 1994 Africa experienced one of the most chilling experiences in the form of the genocide in Rwanda. This was a premeditated and well orchestrated act of killing, using diverse tactics of fomenting distrust and hatred. This systematic orchestration culminated finally in mass killings of the minority but influential Tutsi people, by the Hutu people who were in the majority (Des Forges 1999). In the pre-genocide period Christianity accounted for the great majority of the people of Rwanda, estimated at 89.6%, of whom 62% were Catholics (Kritzinger, JJ, in Kumalo n.d.). What is still inconceivable to many analysts of this genocide is how a country of such huge religious allegiance could turn against itself in such gruesome manner. More perplexing is that this happened despite the key Christian precepts of love, peace and communalism (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4ff; Heb.12:14)<sup>72</sup>. However in following some of the accounts on the genocide there is shocking evidence of complicity of religion in the genocide.

Firstly, the finger points to a form of ethnically based ideology or 'theology' by some Catholic priests<sup>73</sup> which taught that the Tutsis were a superior ethnic group (Des Forges 1999). If the Roman Catholic Church has the largest following in this country, then the damage caused by such propaganda was enormous in terms of fermenting hatred between the ethnic groups as well as generating acrimony towards religion, and Christianity in particular. The official position of the Roman Catholic Church on

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<sup>72</sup> 1Cor.13:4-6, ...Love is kind... It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil ...; Heb.12:4, Make every effort to live in peace with all men.

<sup>73</sup> The Roman Catholic Missionary "White Fathers" came to Rwanda in the late 1880s and developed the "Hamitic" theory of race origins which taught that the Tutsi were a superior race. (Des Forges 1999).

complicity in the genocide has been that of denial and putting the blame on the concerned individual priests.

Secondly, some Christian leaders<sup>74</sup> have been tried before the International Criminal Tribunal for having a direct hand in the genocide (Des Forges 1999). Even though they were acquitted but the perceptions are clear for everyone to see, religion could not come out of this human disaster unscathed. In fact this gives rise to the third point, the 'silence' of the church, especially from an official point of view, on the ensuing genocide over a period of years, especially during the intense campaigns, prior to the actual massacre is a matter of concern for any nation that boasts a majority of followers in the country, which in the case of Rwanda is estimated at about 56% of Roman Catholics. It is on the basis of this Rwandan tragedy that Christianity as stakeholder in giving birth to a new Africa may be termed a suspect and perhaps unqualified.

### **5.3.3 Northern and Western Africa and Islamic turbulence**

The ongoing bloody conflicts in these parts of Africa (e.g. Sudan and Darfur) are a matter of grave concern. A review of statistics again points to the fact that North and West Africa has people of Islamic religion in overwhelming majority. Many countries that are governed by regimes belonging to Islam have displayed great intolerance to other religions. This is in itself counter-productive to prospects, peace and democracy. How do you then begin to negotiate a united Africa when Islamic militants view the introduction of Shari 'a as a non-negotiable form of governance to which all the people must be subjected? Africa's prospect of regeneration hangs on several key issues and religion is one of them.

Despite these elements of disturbing discord, religion cannot be wished away. It is incumbent on me to make a strong statement here for religion. The next paragraph is

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<sup>74</sup> Bishop Misago, a Roman Catholic priest, was accused of corruption and complicity in the genocide but was cleared of all charges in 2000 (Des Forges 1999).

a brisk attempt to do just that and to refute any attempt to jostle religion out of the picture in shaping the new Africa we all want to see.

#### 5.3.4 “Is Africa incurably religious?”

This question is apparently a poser to the statement made by Geoffrey Parrinder in 1969, that, “Africans have been called incurably religious” (Parrinder, in Kenzo 2004:??). This statement evoked a heated debate thirty years later, particularly in a dual debate involving Jan Platvoet & Henk van Rinsum, on the one hand, and Kehinde Olabimtan, on the other. “At the centre of the contention [were] John Mbiti and Okot p'Bitek” (Olabimtan, 2003:1), inevitably because of the classical works they have written on African religions. It was Mbiti (1989:1) who said, “Africans are notoriously religious” and Platvoet & Van Rinsum (2003:123) credit p'Bitek with being, until recently, “the only African scholar to oppose it<sup>75</sup>,” (Platvoet & Van Rinsum, 2003:123). For intends and purposes of this thesis I will not replay this debate. I will, however, merely bring it on to point out that while it was almost a ‘given’ that Africa is (was) “incurably religious”, the recent debate tries to contest this claim.

In South Africa there are many legends that point to the perception that the African belief system is intertwined with their lifestyle and projects. Undocumented stories are often told how locals will argue for religious rituals to be performed before a building, a construction of a bridge or any other major project to recognise territorial or ancestral spirits partly as a means to avert disasters of any sort resulting from not recognising the ruling spirits in the area. A well documented legend though is the account of the construction of the Kariba Dam in the early 1950s where incidents involving the Nyaminyami<sup>76</sup>, a Zambezi River god living in the river gorge (Wikipedia/Nyaminyami 2009), impresses on the need to recognise the religious world of the African peoples on micro and macrocosmic issues of life such as the African Renaissance.

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<sup>75</sup> i.e., the claim that Africa is incurably religious.

<sup>76</sup> It is said the Kariba Dam was built amidst objections by local people whose protests landed on deaf ears but whose last resort was Nyaminyami's intervention. In 1957 a mysterious flood destroyed the dam killing workers. In yet another mystery, the bodies of workers including of those white workers were found floating in the place of the sacrificed white calf. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyaminyami accessed 14/07/2009).



Statistics, with all the reservations that go with them, help primarily as indicators to issues of quantitative nature<sup>77</sup>. In this argument for Africa's religious nature I hereby want to demonstrate that we cannot continue to ignore this reality of Africa. The following statistical picture in Table 5-1 is too emphatic to ignore.

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<sup>77</sup> I agree with Saayman (2003:58) (Mission studies XX-1, 39, 2003) that we cannot rely on statistics for accuracy, especially in Africa, but should be used merely as indicators.

**Table 5-1: Religious adherence in Africa (estimates 2006)**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total population (2006)</b>	<b>% Christian</b>	<b>% Muslim</b>	<b>% Traditional</b>	<b>% Hindu</b>	<b>% Bahá'í</b>	<b>% Jewish</b>	<b>% No religion</b>	<b>% Atheist</b>
Middle Africa	118,735,099	81.3	9.60	8.00	0.10	0.40	0.00	0.60	0.00
Eastern Africa	302,636,533	62.0	21.10	15.60	0.50	0.40	0.00	0.30	0.00
Northern Africa	209,948,396	9.00	87.60	2.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.10	0.10
Southern Africa	50,619,998	82.00	2.20	9.70	2.10	0.70	0.10	2.70	0.30
Western Africa	274,271,145	59.10	21.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00
Total/Avg	956,211,171	58.68	28.48	7.10	0.54	0.30	0.02	1.00	0.08

Statistics: at ([http://www.reference.com/browse/Religion\\_in\\_Africa](http://www.reference.com/browse/Religion_in_Africa)) accessed 14/7/2009

This table of figures depicts estimate aggregates of religious adherence in Africa for the year 2006. Figures that represent the non-religious and the atheists are 1% and 0.08% respectively. Again I do not question the probability of such categories existing, especially writing from South Africa<sup>78</sup> which is acclaimed for odd categories of minority groups, but I here remark about the almost 99% percent of religious people on the continent.

I am now in a better position to give an overall impression on the legitimacy of religion in the role of championing an African rebirth. The following points only help to fortify the preceding scenario and to put these contestations in the perspective of the imbedded sum total religious character Africa undeniably is, whether told or observed.

A few summary points in favour of this argument can be advanced:

- African people are overwhelmingly religious;
- Statistical representation emphasise the dominance of religion, as an inherent lifestyle of African people;
- The major religions, viz., are the so-called Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), with the common feature of monotheism, common prophets, common literary content references, e.g. “Messiah”, “Mosaic reverence”, etc.; common elements of social-peaceful co-existence imbedded values of love, peace, respect, charity, etc. These elements can be used constructively as unifying factors instead of divisive points of contention;
- Many of the mainstream proponents of these religions form part of “Dialogue” cliques and “social relief collaborations” in local communities, points of disaster relief and at intellectual conferences and interdisciplinary collaborations;

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<sup>78</sup> In the recent interviews of candidates to fill the position of the chief justice, the Minister of Justice, Mr Jeff Radebe, by the questions he asked two candidates, is appalled by their claims, one of atheism and another of agnosticism (Sowetan, 22 July 2009), which is viewed by many South Africans as strange despite the many years of existence of the South African Communist Party.

- In many socio-political activities they appear together, serve together, such in ceremonies (e.g. the inauguration of the South African president was presided over by Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and African Traditional leaders);
- The corporate world demonstrates that there is a common space for all (e.g. banks, food manufacturers, international airports, have made special consideration for religious sensitivities in a manner that does not digress against other religions).
- Some politicians who are well known for their “neutrality” in respect of their religious affiliation, have often used scriptural citations in their major political speeches on national broadcasters to impress on the audience their amiability to religious wisdom. (e.g. former Pres Mbeki has, especially in his latter days of his South African presidency quoted remarkably from the Bible (cf. West 2008).

I suppose I have succeeded in appreciable terms to make the point that the African Renaissance we aspire for should have a view that represent religious aspirations of the African people and to contend with this worldview to qualify as a holistic movement. These few examples persuade us to think but positively of the role of religion in advancing the course of a renascent Africa. I am convinced that religion in an indispensable hallmark of the African economic-, socio-political contours of the continent.

We want to move further on in this chapter by discussing as a central thesis of this religious dimension, the role of Christianity, and at its heart, Missiology as the indispensable fibre that holds together all arguments towards the African Renaissance religious discourse. The necessary question therefore is, why then is Missiology (even missions) a legitimate agent in the creation of a religious perspective towards the African Renaissance? Let me then proceed to introduce the Missiological perspective as a befitting strand through which the African Renaissance can be interrogated and reshaped. The following discussion on the legitimacy of Missiology will in itself lend credible claim to why Africa’s religiosity should not be ignored. The discussion will further highlight the extent to which missions have

impacted the life of Africans in general, and especially those in the sub-Saharan continent.

## 5.4 Why Missiology?

The subject of Missiology in relation to theology as a whole has been amply discussed by (Bosch 1991). While at one stage the academic history, especially during High Middle Ages, 'Theology' was regarded with high esteem as "The Queen of the Sciences" (Wikipedia/Theology)<sup>79</sup>. In later years Missiology made a peculiar claim in respect of Theological disciplines. Martin Kahler, a systematic theologian, wrote that mission is "the mother of theology" (see *also*, Bosch 1991:16, 489). He claimed that Theology developed as "an accompanying manifestation of the Christian message" (Missiology.org 2010). It is in this respect that subsequently, Missiology is also considered as the mother of theology (Missiology.org 2010). This claim is not a mere posturing. Bosch argues that "Missiology, a branch of the discipline of Christian Theology, is not a disinterested or neutral enterprise; rather, it seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith (Bosch 1991:9). But Bosch likens Missiology to other faith formations on their persuasion in that it is missionary. To this he says, "It shares this missionary characteristic with several other religions, notably Islam and Buddhism and also with variety of ideologies, such as Marxism" (Bosch 1991: 8-9). Because of these commonalities within theology and with other religions, Missiology assumes a transcendental character that (can) serve as a universal probe to diverse issues of humanity. In fact, Bosch (1991:10) attests that mission, (singular), which is the mission of God (*missio Dei*) is an act of love to the world and therefore missions (plural), which is the activities of the church (the *missiones ecclesiae*) is a 'coherent, broad and deep' task responding to the 'exigencies of human life' and takes concrete form "in respect of the realities of injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination, and violence" (Bosch 1991:10). Bosch

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Thomas Albert Howard, *Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.56: '[P]hilosophy, the *scientia scientiarum* in one sense, was, in another, portrayed as the humble "handmaid of theology".'

embodies these dual activities (divine and human) in the person of Jesus Christ who through the activity of evangelism invites Christians to be His agents of salvation and holistic ministry of service in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ human beings and the whole ecosystem is moved to an 'abundant life' (John 10:10). As to what exactly is mission, Bosch (1991:9) says "mission remains indefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections". Such a 'wide' and 'accommodative' definition has often exposed 'Missiology' to critics who argue that this makes 'everything' mission and thus relegates it to 'nothing' (Stephen Neil, in Pachua 2000).

I do, however, concur with Bosch's definition of missions which compares favourably with many international missionary conferences that regard the missionary task as the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world! (cf. Bosch 1991:10). Therefore within this wide scope of missionary responsibility Africa is but my focus. It is then for me in Missiology to determine, in terms of the presenting context to cut the relevant theological strands that will talk to the challenge the call for African Renaissance lays bare to us.

In the synopsis above I have presented the main tenets of Missiology and mission(s) in a nutshell. I have argued for relevance and legitimacy for Missiology in the quest for a 'new' Africa in the preceding paragraphs. The message of Missiology as an agent of change is imminent and is at the core of rebirth and is itself an advocacy of new life *per se*. This stimulates us to pry even much deeper into the subject of 'rebirth', but this time applying Missiological tools.

## **5.5 Rebirth**

The concept of 'rebirth', which is also known in French as *renaissance*, has deep theological connotations. The term 'renaissance' cascades into a long list of several synonymous concepts. These include newness of life, metempsychosis, conversion, regeneration, revitalization, to be born-again, reincarnation, renewal, refurbishment,

restoration, reformation, enlightenment , renaissance, spiritual rebirth, transition, rectify, rejuvenate, reclaim, re-establish, repair, correct, amend, domesticise, domesticate, remedy, doctor, fix, reinstate, resituate, crystallise, illuminate, straighten out (Answers.com 2009/rebirth).

By advancing this long list of synonyms I hope to address the many sad descriptions Africa has had to endure under various critics. The task at hand for Missiology is to address and dispel the afro-pessimistic reality, attitudes or spirit the continent has had to contend with even in this age. The application of these terms tools in search for appropriate solutions, will be evident as I unpack this subject moving forward. One way that is close to African thought, is to use images to try and represent a problem or a solution. In the next paragraphs I will explore a few of these images in the context of the African renaissance.

### 5.5.1 Concepts and images of rebirth

Images and symbols have powerful messages for those who use them. Many of the images are taken from nature and the phenomena of nature's diverse elements. (cf. Mbiti). In the quest for a deeper understanding of rebirth, it is helpful to understand renaissance from some of Africa's many imageries and pictorial language and thereby try to embed compatible concepts within the search for lasting solutions.

In certain African cultures, for example Bapedi<sup>80</sup>, a new day is a form of rebirth. The rise of the sun across the distant eastern horizon occasions a new fresh day. In places where the horizon is formed by a stretch of a body of water, such as a lake or the sea, when the sun rises in the morning it is viewed as resurfacing from the depth of the sea where it was being washed. According to other cultures (such as *the Amandebele people* of the Free State province) the sun is viewed as a "divine eye", which during the run of the day sees the activities of human beings. Many of these

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. the Sepedi traditional song, "Letšatši ke khumagadi, mosetsana o tšwa botlhaba-tšatši..." (literally: The sun is the queen, the lady rises from the east ...")

activities are episodes of misery, such as death, wars, disease, evil, etc. Therefore, the rising sun from the depth of the sea is likened to the eye that has been cleansed from yesterday's sad journey across the sky, and now rises with a sense of hope. That is, a new day might well bring new life and new possibilities devoid of the past's calamities. It is in this sense therefore that I explore the notion of the sunshine of a new day, as a symbol or image that represents the newness of life. This therefore encourages me to explore even further other concepts of rebirth to which the African Renaissance can be associated with, hooked, synchronised and 'replayed'.

## **5.6 Renaissance as Reincarnation**

The concept of 'reincarnation' is considered to have its foundations in the oriental religions and, therefore, is relatively unknown in the West (Wikipedia/reincarnation 2009). By definition 'reincarnation' means "to be made flesh again" (Wikipedia/reincarnation 2009). It is a doctrine or metaphysical belief that holds that "some essential part of a living being ... survives death to be reborn in a new body (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation). An overview of religions on this matter indicates that all major oriental belief systems, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Taoism, have it as one of their tenets. 'Reincarnation' is also found among Western religions and traditions among which the following are included, namely, ancient Greek philosophy, Christianity, Gnosticism, Judaism, Islam, Native American nations, Norse mythology, Naturalism and Zoroastrianism (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation). In contemporary thought and faith systems, it found among others, modern thinkers, Anthroposophy, Theosophy, Scientology, Edgar Cayce, Eckankar and the New Age Movement (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation). Furthermore, the concept exists among Indian and Western popular cultures and some scientific research works which however do not have conclusive evidence on the matter (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation).

Let me examine the facets of this concept closely, but lift up only those which are relevant to my discussion on the African Renaissance.



### 5.6.1 **Continuity versus discontinuity**

At the heart of re-incarnation is the notion of continuity. This continuity has variable intricacies according to each faith system. Among the Buddhists continuity can be explained as “a sequence of related lives stretching over a very long time” (Wikipedia 2009/Incarnation). There is also a belief which claims that some individuals, whatever the circumstances of their birth, are recognised as having a special destiny in a manner that is different from other human beings. Among those recognised as having a special destiny is the renowned Dalai Lama (Laetusinpraesens 2009/Born-again). Among the Tibetan Buddhists it is rare to be reborn in the immediate next life as a human being. Good deeds and positive state of mind at time of death create this possibility. This peaceful mind at death stimulates a ‘virtuous seed’ and subsequently a fortunate rebirth. On the contrary, a disturbed mind or a state of anger at death stimulates a non-virtuous seed and therefore an unfortunate rebirth (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation).

The notion of continuity is also consistent with, among others, Hinduism, Jainism, and especially Taoism where it is stated, “birth is not a beginning; death is not an end ... [but, life] is presented as existence without limitation” (Wikipedia 2009/Incarnation). According to Buddhism, there are however limiting factors, namely, *anattrā* and *ātman* which explained in simple terms mean, “at the death of one personality, a new one comes into being, much as the flame of a dying candle can serve to light the flame of another” (Wikipedia 2009/reincarnation). This means there is no permanent and unchanging identity. Though, with Jainism and Sikhism the possibility of one person or soul being incarnated into a lesser being is great and depends on one’s *karmas* (deeds). For instance, evil actions, sinful deeds and failure to remember the Creator (and unless absolved by the Almighty God, according to the Sikh) may lead to being incarnated into ‘lower’ life forms such as snakes, ghosts, animals, etc. (Wikipedia 2009/Incarnation).

Reincarnation for the African Renaissance according to the above notions has several implications. Firstly, the need to continue on the path of good and worthy

deeds is essential for the African dream. We need “virtuous seed” to engender a sense of hope and continued reconstruction of the continent. Perhaps the past glory cannot be regained in full however a ‘new identity’ for Africa can be forged; an identity that seeks to achieve even ‘higher’ forms of life. For the case of the African Renaissance, it is the proponents of democracy and good governance, of accountability, of value and respect for human life and of general prosperity for humanity and other forms of life in ecosystem, whose *karmas* (deeds) can stimulate and bolster continuation on the ‘virtuous seed’ of life and hope. But it is in the bad leaders of Africa that non-virtuous seed and subsequently unfortunate rebirth of social misfits is perpetuated.

The problem with the doctrine of reincarnation found in the Hindu incarnational version of *moksha*, is where a person’s *karma* reaches a state of perfection that the person becomes one with the divinity (Brahman) or continue into eternity in the presence of the supreme being (e.g. Krishna). This evokes criticism similar to the one leveled against Christianity by the pan-Africanists in which they accuse Christians for advocating a position of ‘seek ye first the kingdom of heaven’, which they argue was a ploy by European Christians missionaries who fixed the eyes of Africans “into the heavens” while the colonial power and greed dug down “into the earth” to enrich themselves with minerals, such as gold and diamonds. On the contrary, ‘heaven’ or Utopia, like that taught by the Jehovah’s Witnesses is what many Africanists would want to see. Secondly, on the positive side, the notion of continuity, not of the same ‘identities’, but of one moment giving rise to the other embedding the same values is an idea to be explored next.

### 5.6.2 **Evolving consciousness**

One critical notion of incarnation is that of an “evolving consciousness” or “stream of consciousness”. This is a Buddhist teaching which states that, “what is reborn is not the person but that one moment gives rise to another and that this momentum continues, even after death” (Wikipedia 2009/Incarnation). I find this important with regard to how much movements and institutions tend to be attached and confined to

individuals. Elsewhere I have asked, is there an African Renaissance after Mr. Thabo Mbeki? Such questions always arise when a specific concept is intricately intertwined with a 'person'. If African Renaissance can be assumed in the light of this 'stream of consciousness' or 'evolving consciousness' I am assured that likewise, the dream and the institutions of the African Renaissance will experience one moment giving rise to the another. It will offset a momentum that continues even after the death of the most notable of the protagonists of the African Renaissance movement. But this momentum should not be in the form of Tibetan Buddhist incarnation where there's no immediate rebirth. I have indicated that the seed of the African Renaissance was conceived in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century by Seme and the like-minded, but died with him only to re-emerge in recent years. Will the current fervor of rebirth also die out? It is the concept of evolving consciousness in the Buddhist reincarnation that should be treasured and nurtured lest the current euphoria around the African Renaissance flickers away and finally dies out, to become a dream that never was.

The concept of reincarnation among Christians was found in the early Christian history among the Gnostics. Since they believed the material was evil and that their 'good' souls were held captive in the 'evil' bodies, reincarnation was held in a negative sense (Wikipedia/Resurrection 2009). The term 'reincarnation' does not exist in the Bible. In fact, such possibility is refuted in the New Testament (cf. Luke 16:20-31<sup>81</sup>; Hebrews 9:7<sup>82</sup>), (Wikipedia/Resurrection 2009). Some observers argue that the Bible points to reincarnation when referring to, 1) the return of Elijah which Jesus points in concealed manner to the coming of John the Baptist (cf. Mark 9:13<sup>83</sup>; Luke 1:17). This argument is refuted on the basis that Elijah never actually died but was 'ruptured'; and 2) The resurrection of Jesus from the dead (Matthew 28:1ff,

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<sup>81</sup> In this 'beyond-the grave' story the rich man implores Abraham to send Lazarus to his next-of-kin to warn them of the torment of hell; Abraham rejects the request and points to the 'living' Moses & Prophets as modes of communication of the Gospel with the living.

<sup>82</sup> Heb.9:7, "But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance".

<sup>83</sup> Mr 9:13 "But I tell you, Elijah has come, ..."; Lu 1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.

cf.28:17<sup>84</sup>); similarly the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:17) and Dorcas (Acts 9:40) and New Testament testimonies to the resurrection. The phenomena here underlines the differences between reincarnation, which is rebirth into a *new* body, and resurrection, which is the return to life of the same body and at same age and condition of the body at its moment of dying. Though Jesus' resurrection may be said was different and could be viewed as an 'apparition'" (Wiki 2009/Incarnation).

Therefore I may conclude that an argument for a Christian reincarnation is a subject of controversy especially that "the overwhelming majority of mainstream Christian denominations rejects the notion of reincarnation and considers the theory to challenge basic tenets of their beliefs" (Wikipedia 2009/Incarnation). I need to reiterate that an in-depth discussion of this and other related concepts of 'rebirth' is not to the *raison d'être* of my thesis, but it is the metaphors that arise out of these concepts that I am looking at, with the purpose to enhance the value of rebirth from a Missiological perspective and to strengthen the campaign for the realisation of the 'dream'. Moving forward, therefore, I now consider the concept of 'resurrection' which is very close to that of reincarnation.

## 5.7 Renaissance as resurrection

By definition 'resurrection' means the "raising from the dead of beings especially human beings" (Wikipedia/Resurrection 2009). Unlike with 'reincarnation' where the principal concept is 'transmigration', with 'resurrection', the same 'person' is raised again in whatever form depending on the belief of that particular faith community.

The resurrection of dead humans is held by many religions but is a central doctrine of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Wikipedia 2009/Resurrection). There are few Biblical stories which tell of persons who as a result of God's miraculous workings rose to life again. In the Old Testament, there is, for instance, a widow's son who was

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<sup>84</sup> Mat. 28:17: When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

resurrected by Elisha (cf. 2Kings 4:32-35)<sup>85</sup>, and a man who returned to life when he touched Prophet Elisha's bones in the tomb.<sup>86</sup> Of all these episodes, it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gained unsurpassed status as a world phenomenon and that even found its way into the calendar of many nations as an official holiday. They celebrate Jesus Christ's resurrection on the day popularly known as the Easter. Excepting faith traditions, there are sources that claim to have records of credible incidents of people rising from the dead, among which is the book by Father Alfred J Herbert (in Wikipedia 2009/Resurrection) who claims 400 true stories of resurrection, and another by Raymond Moody (1977)<sup>87</sup> entitled "Live after life" in which he claims to have observed several patients clinically certified dead coming back to life.

In this discussion, I am not concerned with the veracity of resurrection as a fact. As a Christian, though, this would be the premise of my faith and my point of departure. For the purposes of this study, however, in this section, I particularly want to identify characteristics of resurrection that can be transported into the concept of renaissance and thereby remodel the African Renaissance accordingly. What has come out clearly about the resurrection, especially that which can be said to be relevant to this discussion, is that resurrection epitomises the notions of hope, resuscitation, new life and new era.

## **5.8 Hope as a crucial tenet of resurrection**

All accounts of resurrection cannot help but have an element of hope. This hope is not only carried in human species, but nature has also taught us to find it in seeds, bulbs, roots, as well as other animal species. In both the animal and plant kingdoms there are intriguing life forms that point to resurrection. Although not entirely true to resurrection, hibernation is an interesting and relevant phenomenon. During winter or draught seasons the absence of life's support giving supplies, some animals like

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<sup>85</sup> 2Ki 8:5 Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life.

<sup>86</sup> 2Ki 13:21 "... so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet."

<sup>87</sup> Raymond Moody was himself a medical practitioner.

frogs, for example, would go into a state as if 'buried and dead' but come the rainy season and the rivers and ponds are full with water, then 'miraculously' these waters would be teeming with the presence of, as much as the evening atmosphere would be loud with the sounds of frogs. In the plant kingdom, the one exciting miracle is the "plant" which would appear 'dead', and would be dry and brittle to touch but with a little touch of water it would instantly sprout to life. These natural phenomena, as metaphors of resurrection, make us think of the African Renaissance in terms of resuscitation to life. Africa must respond positively to the life-giving stimuli. The worrying question can be, how long should aspirants of home wait for the 'rain season'. Of the 'current clouds' that make promises of rain, which of them are saturated with droplets of water that will fill the dry plains of misery and destitute across the landscape of the African continent. Africa has waited too long while dictators, corrupt officials pillage her resources and apathy, negative and destructive attitudes, actions and lifestyle among its people continue to undermine the messages of hope and the call to rise from 'the dead'.

Resurrection as a human experience, whether it is in the Bible, in narratives, in scientific accounts or prophecies, appeals strongly to humanity's sense of hope; hope of meeting the deceased in a near or distant future life. This deep sense of expectation is also a direct motivation for the living to take part in actions that will ensure their own resurrection, for their own good, but also with the hope of meeting their deceased loved ones (cf. 1Cor.15: 58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain")<sup>88</sup>. Renaissance as resurrection, therefore, inculcates a 'never say die' spirit over against that which sees life culminating in the 'dead and buried'. It is a spirit that is invigorated by new possibilities of life.

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<sup>88</sup> This statement is motivated by the act of resurrection in 1Cor.15: 54, "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

The future of the African Renaissance should be imbedded in such a spirit. The fatalistic attitudes of destruction that see people living for the 'here and now', in the manner of the ancient adage that says, "Let's eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we die". The prophet Isaiah quotes this expression to highlight a negativity that emanated among the Israelites who were self-deceptive. It is remarkable how he refers to the extravagant connotation of this expression, citing, "But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! 'Let us eat and drink' you say, 'for tomorrow we die!'" (Isaiah 22:13). This has been the attitude of many politicians and influential community leaders in business and other careers, when they get into power and access riches, they soon run down their countries into poverty. Resurrection means there is life 'after-all' and there is going to be accountability and there is going to be judgment and reprisals. It also means that the past comes back either to laud us for managing our lot responsibly for the sake of generations that come after us, or it comes back to haunt us for our failures.

### 5.8.1 Resuscitating the old

One of the nostalgic feelings of a resurrection is the possibility of meeting the 'old' persons. In many works of art and music this is sentiment is often represented through these forms of art of hope.<sup>89</sup> This wonder of 'meeting the old' is evident among Africans. It is evident in the preservation of important items of some dead with a view to their return to life. For instance, the Egyptians did not only mummify the Pharaohs but also kept their important treasures in their 'graves' or store rooms. It is the kind of preservation we read about the body of Christ by the woman with the perfume (Mark 14:8). Jesus personally acknowledges this<sup>90</sup>. The excitement of meeting the resurrected Jesus is evident in Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18)<sup>91</sup>. It is

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<sup>89</sup> Brook Benton's famous musical track, "I dreamt of a city called heaven", fantasies on the moment when he would be meeting Jesus and other saints of old; and he will express his gratitude for salvation. (Benton 1971).

<sup>90</sup> Mr 14:8: She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

<sup>91</sup> In verse 17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, ..."

obvious that only those good persons and items that are important for life and sustenance are considered necessary for continuation and therefore worthy of resurrection. On the other hand, the Bible talks of the destruction of the evil and wicked in a lake of fire<sup>92</sup>. Preservation takes many forms and is important. It is practiced by different sciences, including mummification (especially among the Egyptians) and embalming. In archaeology fossils are discovered, retrieved and preserved. On the basis of preserved items some reconstruction is done in order to recreate replicas of these old life forms and thereby find solutions to some of the nagging question confronting science today.

It is these preserved 'old life forms' that African Renaissance exponents try to resuscitate and bolster hope for the future. Renaissance as resuscitation of the old, therefore, as noted from the speeches of Mr Thabo Mbeki, for example, is not a casual and inept exercise but finds leverage in resuscitating only the golden olden days (cf. The Mapungubwe collection)<sup>93</sup>. However, 'renaissance' as resurrection is not merely 'resuscitation'. In the Biblical sense it also contains elements of "... imperishable; ... glory; ... power; ... spiritual" (1Cor.15:42-44).

African Renaissance should therefore hope to resuscitate those issues and items that carry these qualities and characteristics. There was and still there lingers an outcry among traditionalist that missionaries either changed or destroyed many African value systems. To reverse these losses and to 'resuscitate the old' several restorative programs of inculturation<sup>94</sup> are in place even in the African Theology and Black Theology. Other sciences have engaged Indigenous Knowledge Systems to achieve 'rebirth' in this regard. However, 'resuscitation' as it were, is a complex exercise. It may complicate matters if not handled responsibly. New forms of life forms and their

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<sup>92</sup> Re 21:8: But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

<sup>93</sup> Mapungubwe is a 13<sup>th</sup> Century Iron Age site in Limpopo Valley from which diverse artifacts of great significance to early African trade were discovered in 1933, and is heralded as an example of another glorious African past ([www.answers.com/topic/mapungubwe-museum](http://www.answers.com/topic/mapungubwe-museum)) accessed 11/01/2010.

<sup>94</sup> *Enculturation* applies to social sciences.



specific conditions may find dissonance in the old ones. Jesus' warning, "No-one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old (Luke 5:36), can prove handy in the balance of the constructive tension between the old and the new. For example, Womanist/Feminist theologies find many traditional lifestyles problematic because of patriarchy and its conservative, restrictive or oppressive modes of approach to women. There is no doubt that new concepts are also necessary to meet modern notions, challenges and prospects consistent with 21<sup>st</sup> century models of life.

Hence the resurrection body of Christ casts some light in our attempt to grasp this quantum age where the development of holograms as a fabrication of modern science to emulate displacement of bodies can assist in the cure of viral infections and cure of diseases. Whether this can be achieved in the real sense of the 'the resurrection of Christ' is another matter.

### 5.8.2 **New life and new era**

Teachings about 'resurrection' do not merely state the resurrection of the body but project a new life and era that comes with it. In the language of the book of Revelations, "there will be no more death or mourning, or cringe or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Rev 21:4). To this new order of the resurrected, the apostles of Jesus immediately associated a political dispensation that was free from domination and oppression of the Roman Empire<sup>95</sup>. Hence they asked the risen Christ, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The hope for a new political era has been there even before Babylonian exile. The imagery of the 'resurrection of the army of skeletons' in the prophet Ezekiel (cf. Ezekiel 37:10)<sup>96</sup> can only inspire national hope over subjugation and domination by foreign powers. Jesus as the 'The King of the Jews' (note the same inscription on his

<sup>95</sup> The Romans had since conquered Palestine in 63BCE (Bright, J. 1972. A history of Israel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Trowbridge & Esher: Westminster Press. p.461).

<sup>96</sup> Ezek 37:10, "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army."

cross as his charge) and the Messiah was expected to usher this new era. There were definite expectations that accompanied this era, according to prophecy. In a nutshell, the messianic prophecy in Luke 4: 18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour", contained these 'new life' ideals and continued to be a beacon of hope to Jews, and especially Jesus' followers.

Our description of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa is far from ideal (cf. Chapter 2). Many Africans, both internally and in the Diaspora, are not only hoping but envisioning a new life and a new era within the notion of an African Renaissance. This is possible. However, to achieve this many accounts of resurrection point to a force outside human endeavours. While Abrahamic religions point to God other religions are either silent or state the possibility as a phenomenon that may occur. If predominant doctrines of resurrection reside within monotheistic religion of Yahweh or Allah, then an African Renaissance that has no room for religion cannot hope to see a rebirth, in a sense of new life, new era, without divine intervention. Because indeed, these are the predominant religions of Africa and in their prayers for this highly sought after 'renewed life', the default mode of resurrection lies imbedded in God; and for the Christians, in the God who has already demonstrated this possibility in his Son, Jesus Christ. The African Renaissance discourse needs to listen to the Christian story of rebirth.

The Bible often talks of children as 'seeds'. It is language that is commonly used with reference to the plant kingdom where a 'seed', as embodiment of new life at the death of a plant, comes very close to model the concept of 'resurrection'. Hence the Bible uses the term 'seed' to a greater extent than the word 'offspring'. As a metaphor, 'seeds' point to the fact that when old life dies, meaning that when founders and forefathers of a faith community die, for example, Abraham, their children emerge as seeds to set forward not only the lineage but also the covenant God has made with the principal partners of the covenant.

## 5.9 Renaissance as being 'born-again'

The concept 'born-again' is in general use, a Christian construct originating from the gospel of John 3:3. It refers to "a spiritual and metaphorical rebirth, accepting Jesus as Messiah, and receiving the Holy Spirit" (Wikipedia 2009/Born again). This concept over the years gained popular use and could no longer be restricted to Christians. The reason for that is self-described 'born-again' Christians are often enthusiastic, devoted and outspoken: hence the phrase came to be used to describe any dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of a cause – e.g. born-again conservative, born-again sports fan, born-again skeptic, etc. (Word iQ.2009/Born Again). This element underlines and defines an attribute of a fervent and committed participant.

However, there are those who would view the concept of being 'born-again' to mean a movement of one from 'death to rebirth'. For example, a person may experience 'death' primarily from within a social circle. Such a person may be said to have died to the society or may be treated as dead – possibly as the result of a scandal or conviction of a crime. Recovery from such a condition may again be perceived and experienced as being 'born-again' – possibly to be repeated (Laetusinpraesens 2009). Repeated acts of being born again may lead to what the author calls, "thrice-born". He cites as an example the 'repeated' rebirth of Jimmy Swaggart (Giulians in Laetusinpraesens 2009).

Politicians are also known to experience some 'rebirth' in their political career especially after showing clear signs of failure ('death'). Such could be said of Tony Blair, John Howard and especially, George Bush after their initiatives in Iraq were conclusively in shambles. Their electoral successes have been referred to as being 'born-again' (Laetusinpraesens 2009). Besides, some politicians like Jimmy Carter, in his presidential campaign for presidency of the USA, have in their campaigns referred to themselves as "born-again" (Wikipedia 2009/Born-again).

In fact, the subject of 'rebirth' as a metaphor of 'born-again' is so diverse that the author of *Laetus in praesens* recognises seven clusters with increasing experiential implications for the individual, namely:

- *Experiential rebirth* (operacy, flow, embodiment of mind, speaking with God, born-again, possession, psychedelic experience, embodiment in song, spiritual rebirth);
- *Cognitive perspective* (metacognition, critical thinking, philosophy, aesthetic sensibility, orders of thinking, systematic, orders of abstraction, disciplines of action);
- *Therapeutical rebirth* (release from trauma, mentors, self-help, discipleship);
- *Developmental rebirth* (education, perspective, initiation, cultural creativity, individuation);
- *Psycho-behavioural rebirth* (sin-to-virtue, changing patterns of consumption, conversion);
- *Socio-religious rebirth* (birthright, destiny, reincarnation, social status, ceremony, ritual, group affiliation, games, sports);
- *Cultural rebirth* (renaissance, aesthetic birth, mytho-poesis).

These clusters serve, as it were, as umbrella names for even varied subtopics of which much can be discussed under them. It therefore suffices for me, following the above mentioned scheme that the subject of rebirth (and born-again) has far reaching roots which cannot be exhausted in this thesis. Clearly, the concept of being 'born-again' speaks more about humans than institutions. It speaks of a resolve by one to make a radical change and make good the failures of the past. As applying to political leaders, it is quite clear many of the African leaders need to be born-again, twice, thrice or more, for many have repeatedly reneged on their promises to their people.

When we place the question of being born-again at the level of the African Renaissance movement, it is important to consider closely the movements with which the concept of being 'born-again' came to be closely associated. The claim of 'ownership' of this concept is said to lie with the group of so-called the 'Jesus People' with whom the Christian counter culture impressed on the "intense conversion experience" and a clear identity of "devout believers" (Wikipedia 2009/Born-again). This formed part of the growing Evangelical Protestant renewal (WordiQ 2009/Born-again) which today is the fastest growing, with profound impact on societies throughout the world. The hallmark of being 'born-again', nowadays, rests with the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement (Wikipedia 2010/Charismatic Christianity). Such a phenomenal growth and influence is what the African Renaissance need; because then all areas of social, cultural, economic and political structures cannot stay unaffected. More than anything, it is the spirit behind the Pentecostal/charismatic movement that the African Renaissance badly needs. This spirit is none other than the Holy Spirit.

Africa's quest for 'salvation' cannot be better expressed than in the words of a popular traditional chorus, "The Holy Spirit will come down and Africa will be saved". African Renaissance cannot hope for any renewal and reconstruction if the life-giving Spirit of God is not allowed to blow through the dry patches and the fallen walls of great past civilizations, the skeletal heroes and heroines of African people<sup>97</sup>, the scattered refugees, the hungry orphans and widows, but also through the self-impostors, dictators and corrupt officials through the length and breadth of the continent of Africa.

### **5.10 A preliminary conclusion on Chapter Five**

In this chapter I have tried to amplify the voice of advocacy for spiritual dimension in the search and endeavours for bringing about the African Renaissance. I have

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<sup>97</sup> I hereby invoke the example of prophet Ezekiel's 'resurrection' of the 'dry bones' (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

demonstrated that, despite faith and religion's inconsistency there is overwhelmingly enough bases for involving spirituality in matters that relate to the African Renaissance. This claim, I have argued, is strengthened by the faith communities' language, practice and disposition that is akin to matter of renewal, rebirth and hope. Christianity has shown to be even outspoken in the fact that, the most vibrant and influential faith campaign is within the so-called 'born-again' Christians, who continue to inspire diverse communities, rich and poor alike, across cultural and racial barriers, with message of hope, sense and reality of new life in health, prosperity and lifestyle. In concluding this chapter, therefore, I want to pose the following questions: What can the African Renaissance movement do to make this presentation meaningful and useful for its program of change? Subsequently what methods are there that Missiology can offer the movement towards the realisation of its dream? I further proceed to end the next chapter with a methodological toolkit used in Missiology as taught at Unisa, namely, the Cycle of Missionary Praxis.

## CHAPTER 6

# 6 THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE AND THE CYCLE OF MISSIONARY PRAXIS

### 6.1 The cycle of missionary praxis

In this chapter I bring the Missionary praxis into dialogue with the concept of the African Renaissance. The purpose of this discussion hopes to make proposals that will serve as operational tools for the African Renaissance's own praxis. In the main I will discuss critically the *cycle of mission praxis* as conceived at Unisa in the Discipline of Missiology. A brief background of this method will be necessary to create an understanding for the case I am making in its favour.

When the Missiologists in the Department<sup>98</sup> of Missiology<sup>99</sup> at Unisa, under the leadership of the internationally renowned Prof David Bosch, jointly wrote a study guide for the first level Missiology course in the late 1980s, they developed a 14-point "grid" to describe each of the seven mission "models" that they had identified at that time (Saayman, 1992; Kritzinger, 1999). It was a rather elaborate framework which was then simplified under the influence of the four-point "pastoral cycle" of Holland and Herriot (1983). Some members of the department then developed it further into a five-point "cycle of missionary praxis" (Karecki 2000)<sup>100</sup> and a seven-point "praxis matrix" (Kritzinger 2010b), namely, 1) Spirituality (at the centre), 2) Agency, 3) Contextual understanding, 4) Ecclesial scrutiny, 5) Theological interpretation, 6) Strategic planning, and 7) Reflexivity. It is the latter cycle that I am going to explore in

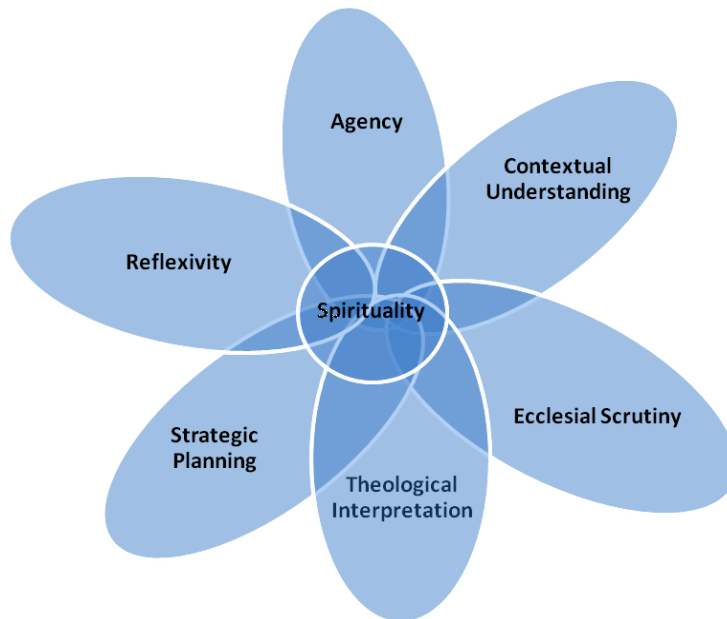
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<sup>98</sup> Among whom were Proff. WA Saayman (now retired), JNJ Kritzinger and NA Botha (both of whom are still teaching).

<sup>99</sup> Missiology was originally an autonomous department, but with the rationalization currently taking place at the university many departments were forced to merge and their statuses turned into Disciplines. Missiology presently resides in the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology.

<sup>100</sup> The five points are: Insertion, Context Analysis, Theological Interpretation, Planning and, at the centre, Spirituality.

this chapter. This matrix, which facilitates an in-depth encounter and therefore a “thick” description of the mission praxis of one person or group, can be presented diagrammatically as follows:



**Missiological Praxis (Kritzinger 2010b)**

Because of its shape I will often refer to it as the “Flower matrix”, and refer to its six points as “petals” and its centre as the “pistil”. I adopt this praxis approach in this study to present a grounded analysis of what I consider to be the essential Missiological dimension of the call for an African Renaissance. For me, the credibility of a Missiological vision depends on its wholeness or integrity, and also on its applicability to everyday life situations of African people today. I will therefore try to highlight how the African Renaissance can be “lived” in faith terms. I will further demonstrate that this matrix can be used either to mobilise a group of committed Christians to work together for transformation in their context, and also show that it can also be used to analyse and explore the usefulness of what is claimed to be transformative praxis. In short, I am going use it here as a systematic research instrument to explore the contours of Missiological involvement in various contexts and thereby appeal for its adoption as a transformative tool for the call for



an African Renaissance. I will start at the 'pistil' or heart of the matrix, the 'spirituality' dimension.

## 6.2 Spirituality

There is always a type of spirituality at work at the heart of all Missiological<sup>101</sup> action. 'Spirituality' is not necessarily to be equated with religion. It is a force that lies in the 'inner person' or a person's faith system. It nudges and inspires a person to different kinds of actions and reactions. While religions are often primarily based on set of rules, creeds and rites, spirituality is based more on the inner voice that feeds convictions and subsequent actions. It is also true, though, that religious statutes, creeds and rituals may be needed to feed and strengthen different forms of spirituality. In my understanding, spirituality is at the centre of the cycle or matrix of Missiological spirituality as a tributary that runs through all other dimensions of the matrix. It is necessary, therefore, that I describe it more fully in relation to the call for an African Renaissance. I intend to do this under the following two sub-headings: different types of spirituality, a spirituality of right action, which should also be understood as prophetic spirituality, and lastly, prophetic spirituality, which should be understood specifically as, 'keeping alive the subversive memory of Jesus' (Arias 1984).

### 6.2.1 Different types of Spirituality

Cannon (1994:321) suggests that there are six underlying types of spirituality that undergird Christian faith and action, namely, 1) spirituality understood as sacred rite; 2) spirituality understood as right action; 3) spirituality understood as devotion; 4) spirituality understood as shamanic meditation; 5) spirituality as meditative contemplation and 6) and spirituality as wisdom. It is the second type of spirituality, namely the spirituality of 'right action', that is critical and lies at the heart of change in

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<sup>101</sup> I am aware of the debate relating to the preferential use of the following terms over against each other, namely, missionary, missional, missiological and mission. My attitude and approach in this regard is integrational and not reductionist. This matter is discussed deeper later in this chapter.

the society and in particular, in socio-political matters (cf. Banda 2010). It is this type of spirituality that will be necessary towards sustaining commitment in the African faith communities to bring about the far-reaching changes that are necessary if any African Renaissance has to take place. Kritzinger argues strongly that to have faith communities as agents of change in Africa, African institutes like universities should have deliberate programmes that aim at the “the Africanisation of Missiology”. In fact in their overall outlook they must be geared as agents of change<sup>102</sup>. He says,

The real test, missiologically speaking, of a religious community is not in the number of people it can attract, but in the quality of involvement of those customers in working for justice in society: the feeding of the hungry, the housing of the homeless, the clothing of the naked, the liberation of people from destructive habits and negative self-images, the preservation of the earth, and much more, so that Africa may indeed *return*, as the pregnant political slogan has it: *Mayibuye iAfrika!* (Kritzinger 1995: 394).

Socio-political engagement and action is not the exclusive terrain of faith communities: many other agents of change, such as political parties, labour unions, civil society organisations (previously called non-governmental organisations); all have an essential role to play. In the history of resistance and defiance against tyranny, such as experienced in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the involvement of organised faith communities, for example, the South African Council of Churches and the Institute for Contextual Theology, it is quite clear that it specifically this *spirituality* that is seated in the self-denial and sacrifice that can contribute towards establishing an effective African Renaissance.

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<sup>102</sup> He cites a well-known African scholar’s contention, Okot p’Bitek, “How can you have a small entity in an African university called ‘Institute of African Studies’? Shouldn’t the whole Makerere University be regarded as: Institute of African Studies?” (in Kritzinger 1995).

### 6.2.2 Prophetic spirituality

Prophetic spirituality is linked to the traditional voice of the Old Testament prophets who echoed the fearsome phrase, "Thus says the Lord!" It is a spirituality that does not simply instruct, teach or coerce towards good deeds. It comes mostly when things get wayward and serious intervention is required. It is in this sense I wish to amend one of Cannon's spiritualities, namely, 'spirituality as right action', to read as 'prophetic spirituality'. It was the lack of 'right action' that provoked God's criticism of Israel through the prophets. Israel's corrupt life was a direct violation of its covenant relationship with God. In the normal run of events many communities need corrective messages. It is common cause to have prophets who are in the communities acting as consciences of the people (cf. Abraham's words to the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:29). However, the prophetic spirituality I am advocating here is understood more in the mode of confrontation. It is robust and apparently fearless. Such is this kind of spirituality with which the prophets of the Old Testament, who included Moses, Jeremiah and Amos, were imbued. It was the same spirituality, in the 1980s, with which spiritual leaders in South Africa, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev Frank Chikane and Rev Allen Boesak and others were imbued. It is quite clear that acting under the influence of this spirituality a great measure of risk is involved. In the struggle against anti-apartheid such confrontations with security forces were very risky. In one meeting of ecumenical movement church leaders coined a phrase that captured the feeling among many: "fearlessness in fear"<sup>103</sup>. It became a phrase that would encourage many frightened ministers to stand their ground despite the government's apparent ruthless dealing with what it called dissent from 'political priests', as it called Ministers of the Word who opposed the apartheid system. It is quite clear that all over the world, governments take strong exception to any advances that seem to undermine their authority or incite people to acts of defiance and protest.

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<sup>103</sup> These words were used in a message of encouragement to a Catholic priest who was delegated to meet Mr PW Botha, then president of the South African Republic. The experience was traumatic but nevertheless he went.

The challenge facing the African Renaissance movement is changing the mindset of political and economic leaders. I have already indicated that political leaders in Africa, of the stature of 'Big Men' and 'Strong Men', have a dreadful tendency to muffle reproach through violent means. I have already indicated in chapter four how critics of these political leaders were needlessly killed. Approaching and confronting such leaders, therefore, entailed a spirit of sacrifice and "fearlessness in fear".

Prophetic spirituality is therefore a spirituality of the cross. It finds its strength in the image of the 'Suffering Servant', Jesus Christ, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (Chapter 53). Unfortunately, the growing trend manifested by the fastest growing churches in Africa, which include the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, is that of presenting a 'prosperity gospel'<sup>104</sup> that is devoid of pain and suffering. Any suffering or pain is mainly in 'testing the Lord' (Mal. 3:10) with monetary and material offerings with definite promises (Gal. 3:29) of financial, material or tangible spinoffs (e.g. work or other opportunities). Another spirituality is that of 'Court Prophets' who 'prophesied' in favour of the kings<sup>105</sup>. South Africa has had a share of these prophets during the Apartheid time, especially among the Calvinistic Dutch Reformed churches, who propagated a 'state theology' that required unqualified obedience to the government. In the present democratic dispensation many of the erstwhile 'prophets' who spoke against the evils of the apartheid government have, unfortunately, been successfully co-opted into current government systems and its services, and their prophetic voice have been completely muted or compromised. Another dimension of a prophetic spirituality is that of compassion (Matthew 25) that attempts to meet the needs of the destitute. While this is correct and good in itself, it often fails to confront the sources of perpetual suffering of the people in affluent countries and societies where the rich continue to get richer and the poor, poorer. Hence the Latin American Liberation Theologian, Dom Helder Camera's, famous words come to mind, "If I give bread to the poor they call me a saint, but if I ask why do the poor not have bread they call me

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<sup>104</sup> I need to say 'prosperity gospel' has many positive elements, including self-esteem and the attitude of hope in the face of adversity, but it is only one side of the 'gospel'.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 22:5-6, 18. Four hundred prophets who prophesied in favour of the King's intended battle, while the prophet Micah prophesied against it.

a communist” (Biographies 2010b). Prophetic spirituality addresses root causes of suffering and digs for answers at the root of the problem. It calls the problem by its name without fear or favour. This is very important especially when considering priests like Archbishop Tutu (one of the few remnants of the prophets of the anti-Apartheid order) who are still committed to the ‘conscience’ of the prophetic voice, by his criticism of the lifestyle of the current President, Mr Jacob Zuma, despite the media and other observers lambasting him for being morally judgmental.

Prophetic spirituality is a highly charged intervention, and therefore, emotionally taxing, it comes against all odds, when stakes are heavily loaded, and it often comes at the right time (Gal.4:4), and addresses specific occasions. Hence Jesus’ ‘confrontational ministry’ against the temple authorities became pronounced towards the close of his earthly ministry as he was soon apprehended and killed; in the same way, John the Baptist’s rebuke of the Herodian royalty could not last long as he was soon caught and beheaded. Saayman (2010) demonstrates this by pointing to different epochs of prophetic discourses in the history of South African. He says that prophets (referring to Ntsikana, Nongqawuse, Siener van Rensburg and Beyers Naude) “appeared and acted in times of social upheaval as a result of human contestation” (Saayman 2010).

Saayman (2010) further highlights the fact that not only individual figures fulfilled the role of prophets but that “there have been institutions which played a prophetic role”. He gives as examples the South African Council of Churches (SACC), a para-Church organisation and the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), a faith-based organ of civil society. It was the ICT which initiated and produced “probably the best known South African statement of prophetic theology” (Saayman 2010), namely, the *Kairos Document* of 1985. This document is divided into four chapters, with the headings, 1) *The Moment of Truth*, which removes the veil of illusion about the nature of the church in South Africa and states that the Church is racially divided and biased in reading and interpreting the Bible; 2) *The Critique of the ‘State Theology’*, which shows how certain biblical texts have been lifted up to legitimize the ‘unquestionable’

authority of the state and its oppressive machinery; 3) *Critique of 'Church Theology'*, which discusses what clearly are theological concerns as considered from the perspective of the powerful minority and which entrench attitudes that pacify the oppressed in the name of and in obedience to God; 4) *Towards a Prophetic Theology*, which advocates social analysis that exposes, among others, oppression and its perpetrators but also points to signs of hope, and lastly, 5) *Challenge to Action*, which suggests appropriate actions to meet state tyranny, and which encourages change from mere 'preaching' to radical programs of action towards liberation of the people. Following along this example was the Evangelical Witness in South Africa (EWISA) which was produced by concerned evangelicals in a process managed by Pastor Moss Ntlha. EWISA's theoretical and practical framework was not far from that of the Kairos Document. In the light of these 'prophetic documents' I can therefore state that, it is this kind of involvement of faith communities based on the inspirations provided by prophetic theology which will be needed to promote an African Renaissance that is fair, just, peaceful and prosperous.

As I have mentioned above, *Spirituality* stands at the centre and permeates all other dimensions of the *matrix cycle*. I now proceed to discuss the first 'petal' of the Missionary praxis flower namely, 'agency'.

### **6.3 Agency**

In Chapter Four above, I discussed briefly 'agency' as a concept that describes individuals and organised groups as instruments of change, especially in socio-political matters. In this chapter I revisit the term, firstly, from the perspective of mission and Missiology, and secondly, in light of Missiological application to the African Renaissance problem. Before I do that let me briefly recall some of the relevant issues relating to 'agency' which I have discussed in relation to the African Renaissance.

### 6.3.1 Recapping on 'role players' in the African Renaissance:

#### **6.3.1.1 *The role of agents in the economic and socio-political spheres***

I have already observed (in chapter 4) how agents in economic, social and political spheres had control over the fate of communities and countries which have been placed in their power. I conceded to the fact that they exercised a lot of influence and that in many instances they either colluded or happened to have a monopoly in many areas affecting the lives of people. Furthermore, one thing that was clear was that they did not tolerate any criticism from their subjects. The hope I expressed in this regard was that Africa should have role players that have transformed attitudes that are sensitive to the interests and needs of the people by:

- 1) Administering justice and listening to the cry of the marginalised, widows and orphans (cf. Isaiah 10:2) as political custodians of the people; or
- 2) ensuring, as economic and commercial powerhouses, fair labour practices and the pricing of commodities in the interest of livelihood for the poor majority; or
- 3) giving service to people in a manner that is humane and sensitive to the ignorance of many illiterate and uneducated citizens, and not to take advantage of their conditions by extorting bribes and unfairly dispossessing the less fortunate in favour of the rich or the powerful; or
- 4) as the intelligentsia and the learned, help communities and individuals formulate problem statements and propose lasting solutions through their literary and conceptual skills so that communities begin to have a meaningful 'voice' in respect of their plight and in the pursuance of lasting solutions — (it is quite apparent where there is a lack of competent expression of grievances and deliberate avoidance or disregard for people's cries the logical recourse is violent protests. Violent protests against an insensitive government the price is even higher. Protesters are incarcerated, injured, maimed and/or killed; or

5) lastly, as protagonists of the African Renaissance, by creating institutes, producing writings and introducing mentoring programs, thereby deliberately leaving a trail of a legacy that can be emulated.

I now dare ask, What then is a possible Missiological response to such a diversified call for agents of change that range from diplomatic interventions to prohibition of gross violation human rights by those in positions of power and influence? How can Missiology, *per se*, contribute toward making these agents instruments of change? In the following paragraph we now proceed to look at one model around which a range of possibilities can be created.

### **6.3.1.2 *The ordinary people***

This is a category of role players which, by its presence and availability, give impetus to the ideals of the African Renaissance, but which, on the contrary, through negative lifestyles, by choice or through ignorance, can also negatively impact these ideals. I have adequately demonstrated that the African Renaissance movement can only ignore ordinary people at its own peril. It is therefore necessary that this essential Missiological perspective should inform how *ordinary people* should be valued and appropriately engaged to enhance prospects of success on the African Renaissance product<sup>106</sup>. A Missiological concept that best describes ‘ordinary people’ is the ‘priesthood of believers’.

### **6.3.2 A transformed agency from a Missiological Perspective**

In introducing a Missiological perspective of transformative *agency* I am going to look at biblical models which, by divine sanction, have been designed to transform societies into positive functional organisms. In fact, the ‘priesthood of believers’ is one category, and there is yet another which features strongly in the New Testament , namely, the so-called ‘five-fold ministries’.

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<sup>106</sup> Missiology maintains strongly that the lay church members, those considered to be “ordinary” church members with no specific theological skills, are essential to successful mission praxis.



### 6.3.3 The Priesthood of believers

The office of priesthood in the Old Testament was the privilege of the Levite and Aaronic children. But in the New Testament dispensation Peter suggests that in Christ this privilege has been opened for Christians (1 Pet. 2:5). This means that all Christians irrespective of status, gender or age could equally serve in the Church towards advancing the Kingdom of God. Thus it became no longer a duty that was reserved for a particular class or family, but effectively introduced a 'classless society' or a form of communalism where the rich and the poor would be regarded and treated equally before the Lord (cf. Acts 4:32ff).

The Holy Spirit had then begun a new era where 'ordinary people' were given the capacity to serve in accordance to their different talents or gifts. That is why Christian teaching is in many respects liberating as it encourages a positivist approach to sustainability. A few examples can be mentioned:

1) Laziness or idleness is condemned and believers are encouraged to work (2 Thess.3:6);

2) The reciprocal outcome of not working is clearly stated in that, support and benefits must be denied any willful withdrawal of labour by any member of the Christian community (2 Thes. 3:10);

3) The 'dependence-' and 'receiver-mentality' is challenged with 'giver-attitude' ("it is more blessed to give, than to receive", Acts 20:35). This attitude comes out clearer against the backdrop of believers who 'gave' even in the moment of their being in need themselves (2 Cor. 8:2);

4) Thoughts of 'entitlement' are squashed by the example of apostle Paul's surrender of the right and privilege of a stipend due to him by congregations (1 Cor.9:12);

5) Effort or input is relativised with output or the degree of productivity (whoever sows sparingly also reap sparingly, 2 Cor. 9:6); and that,

6) God rewards as well as complements human effort and giving (Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over). This is a faith dimension which ensures that despite what may

appear as human failure in logistics, a divine transcendental leverage inspires endurance and hope for success (men proposes god fulfils, Prov. 16:1, 19:21); believers plant and water, but God causes to grow, 1 Cor.3:6-7; God kept on adding on their bases of the believers' outreach (Acts 2:47). This Missiological perspective is a necessary thesis when I consider the post-independence attitudes. In the post-independence era, the spirit of entitlement engulfed many so-called 'war veterans' who simply wanted to wallow in the 'loot' left by colonial masters. Indeed it became the right of the few powerful and their close associates to benefit. In South Africa a similar situation came in a bit different manner. The spirit of entitlement came in the form of social grants as the government tried to meet the basic needs of indigents and underprivileged. Homeless parents who qualified as indigents received free so-called 'RDP houses'<sup>107</sup> and free basic services such as water and electricity. These social grants, however, created a growing perception that they are breeding a generation of lazy dependants who would not take up job opportunities lest they lose their 'free' share.

African Renaissance needs strategists who will engage people constructively and increase a sense of dignity and humanity among the poor and the needy without antagonising the rich and the working, who should not feel they are taken for a ride or milked in the interest of 'the idle'. One further category that needs mentioning is the unfortunate group of refugees and foreign nationals. The Bible has several texts wherein the plight of aliens is given a sympathetic attention. In the Bible God is portrayed as God of all who requires justice and fairness be meted to aliens, hence he requires Israel, "... to have the same law for the alien and the native-born" (Lev. 24:22).

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<sup>107</sup> 'RDP houses' are basic houses mostly unpartitioned two rooms, with a toilet inside, central electrical distribution box with mounted 2 supply outlets, and water tap outside or shared by a few households.

#### 6.3.4 **Five-fold ministries (Eph.4:11-12)**

'Five-fold ministry' refers to a category of specialised agents mentioned by the apostle Paul in Ephesians (4:11-12; cf. also 1Cor.12:28). This is a category of individuals who are called in the body of believers to act as leaders with distinct gifts for specific roles and purposes. The five portfolios are sometimes called 'ministries' for the functions and services they perform, or 'offices' for the types 'ordinations' and authority they represent in the body of Christian believers. I will use 'offices' and 'ministries' in this discussion interchangeably.

In discussing the ministries I will specifically highlight the *purpose, process & goal* for which Jesus instituted, according to Paul. These offices have their *purpose*, as laid out in Eph.4:12-13, namely, to *prepare* God's people for works of *service*. The indicative *process* is that of *building up* the body of Christ to the extent that of *reaching unity* in the 'faith and knowledge' of Jesus Christ. When this happens a process of transformation would be achieved as an end-product or goal that is manifest in the state of *maturity* according to the degree of *perfection* found in Christ.

Therefore, five-fold ministry is a considered agency with the power, authority and competence to achieve what it is designed for. A brief look at these ministries shows that they have both continuity and discontinuity with the Judaic religious tradition. Offices that express continuity are 'prophets' and 'teachers' as they are found in the Old Testament. The other offices were established with the founding of the Christian church. I will now discuss them individually in the following section, firstly, *apostles*.

##### **6.3.4.1 Apostles**

'Apostles' became a new agency in God's history of salvation, besides the traditional office of 'prophets'. They formed a foundation (Eph. 2:20) upon which the church would be developed. However, Christian church traditions have differed on whether this office is transferable to next generations of church leadership or ended up with Jesus' select twelve. It would seem, though, from the etymology of the Greek term 'apostello' meaning, 'to send' it is a longstanding calling "until the very end of the age" (Mt.28:20).

This category of Jesus' foundational core of faithful followers, displayed inherent values, such as, being principled (for instance, choosing to obey God than men, Acts 5:29), disciplined (Not allowing cheating as in the case of Ananias and Saphirra, Acts 5:1ff), practising self-sacrifice and service (leaving everything to follow Jesus, (Mark 10:28ff) and martyrdom (being prepared to die for the Lord, Mt 18:14). It is quite clear that a combination of these qualities is essential for agents of transformation. A simplified overview of the agency of apostleship, based on these values, gives two spiritual perspectives that are lacking in most leaders in the African political agency; the one being, exocentric and the other centrifugal.

Apostleship is, on the one hand, exocentric. This means that it views itself and acts out its responsibilities from a source and centre which is outside itself, namely, Jesus Christ. Christian leadership is not an end in itself, but it is always indebted to Christ and gives the honour and glory to Jesus Christ. It always says, "thine done, is mine done". This is absolutely an opposite stance to the egocentric type of leadership that thrives on a 'me-myself-and-I' attitude. The latter, is a leadership style that has filled its own coffers, drained the resources of nations and left millions of Africans in the abyss of destitution.

Apostleship as a ministry is, on the other hand, also centrifugal. This means that it empties itself for the sake of the other. It is outgoing and takes pleasure and satisfaction when the needs of those served are met. On the contrary many African leaders have demonstrated an appetite of drawing to themselves honour, praise and wealth. Next is the office of *prophets*.

#### **6.3.4.2 Prophets**

Prophets come from the Old Testament order. I have already shared in the paragraph on 'Spirituality' the need for a 'prophetic' spirituality. I will therefore not pursue this office further except to indicate that, it was hoped that the African Peer Review Mechanism as functional quality control system of the African Renaissance would be

prophetic by nature. Such a prophetic approach would hopefully reprimand deviant leaders, as well as spelling out the consequences of bad practice in all spheres of the operations of African states. This prophetic dimension is lacking though in the peer reviews made public so far, hence many African states continue to linger on the brink of ruin. The following office is that of *evangelists*.

#### **6.3.4.3 Evangelists**

The office of evangelists is contained in the meaning of the word itself, 'carriers of the Good News'. Paul in his letters to the early Christian congregations figured himself as a committed agent of the good news even at the point of being sacrificed for it (2Tim. 4:6). At the heart of his mission was the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. In Jesus there is abundant life as encapsulated in his mission statement, in Luke 4: 18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." This was Jesus Christ's core message and this is what he did, as he reported to John the Baptist (Luke 22:7).

The 'evangelists' therefore did not have an alternative gospel (Gal.1:6). Therefore theirs was not 'empty electioneering' in democratic societies, and it was also not 'empty promises' by those posturing for positions of power or staging a *coup de tat*. African Renaissance agents need the mettle demonstrated by evangelists in the conviction of their message so that they can export with conviction what the continent promises to offer even if it is not visible or realised. They need to have the tenacity of 'crossing boundaries' like missionaries and building a diplomatic integrity that is backed by the resolve of a continent that wishes to break loose from the shackles of the bad past history. Next is the office of *ministers*.

#### **6.3.4.4 Ministers**

In this office of 'ministers', Paul presents the church with an important model of service. Firstly, the body metaphor (1 Cor.12.) depicts 'unity in diversity' that

underlines a need-based cooperation among the different parts of the body. He also impresses on the church that individual members have different talents and degrees of strength to serve. Nonetheless, these diverse qualities are not for selfish interests but for purposes of serving the body. The body becomes wholesome when there is an integrated and coordinated functioning of all body parts. Therefore the service ministers offer, is not just uninformed actions, but is part of a dynamic praxis that critically applies word-and-action in a manner that forms synergy towards a liberating and refreshing life of service.

The African Renaissance agency should benefit in this model of divine sanctioned ministry. It is my understanding that 'ministries' of state departments and their heads, who bear the same title as of the church, for example, 'Ministers of Finance', were by virtue of their naming designed to *offer service* to the communities. On the contrary, instead of serving, the sooner most get into these posts, they become defined by their greed and self-enrichment activities and earn themselves derogatory names such as, 'fat-cats' and 'gravy-train riders'.

In recent times, South Africa has realised an upsurge of violent protests in what is generally termed 'service delivery protests'. People in disadvantaged areas complain about squalid conditions under which they live while the people they have elected 'to serve' them are always seen exquisite designer clothing and move around in elegant vehicles. Many have moved from the midst of their fold and bases of service and have relocated to upmarket houses in suburbs far away from the very people they purport to represent. Christ's ministers take after him, being in the midst of the people, devoid of comfort (Mat.8:20), crying about their conditions of misery (Luke 19:41), serving through available means, even sacrificing his life for their sake (Mat.26:28).

Moreover, to be a 'minister' also means creating conducive conditions for people to serve themselves. For instance, the South African government has introduced a tender system by which people with skills are invited to offer services in key areas of

need. One of the conditions of tender systems requires local communities to offer labour while acquiring skills they previously did not have. Through the tender system wealth and skills are ploughed back into these communities. They are then empowered and required to continue with maintenance of products they have helped create or develop. This is then termed sustainable development. Most local churches especially of African Initiated type are familiar with this kind of service. Lastly we discuss *teachers* next.

#### **6.3.4.5 Teachers**

'Teachers' is the last 'office' or 'ministry' of these 'five-fold ministries'. It has its major calling in 'instruction'. An important element in the 'Great Commission' according to Matthew 28:20 is Jesus' instruction, "teach them". This became evident when Apostles placed a high premium on the Word, to the extent that they created a special wing for 'service delivery' in the *deacons*, so that they may not "neglect the ministry of the word of God" (Acts 6:2). It stands to reason why Paul instructs Timothy: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (2Tim. 4:2). Teaching continued to be central in the Church so that a pastor in some churches, such as the Reformed tradition, is incorporated in what is specifically named, *ministerium Verbum*<sup>108</sup>, and is placed higher than all other offices, including evangelists, and is held in exclusion of the offices of *apostles* and *prophets*.

Over many years teachers have been responsible for propagating doctrine upon which Church life is built. Based on Jesus' teachings, this teaching ministry is holistic and transformative. Great church institutions and ministerial orders are based on theological and biblical interpretation. The missionary enterprise all over the world has been responsible for 'teaching' the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) in the mission schools. They also taught other entrepreneurial skills (vocational

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<sup>108</sup> Most, if not all, South African indigenous languages have translated the office of *Ministers* as *Teachers* suggesting a *combination* of these two and/or an elimination of *Ministers* in favour of *Teachers*, a matter that require further research.

schools), as well as establishing primary healthcare centres (mission hospitals). It was during this order of service that teaching and nursing were viewed with pastoral ministry as 'callings'.

In South Africa education was a domain that was viewed with great potential for imperial control. Saayman (2007) notes that in 1927 a Roman Catholic missionary strategist had told fellow missionaries in Africa that, "Who owns the schools, will own Africa ..." Indeed part of missionary strategy of the Dutch Reformed mission was with the collaboration<sup>109</sup> of the government to introduce Christian National Education. The African Renaissance agency can learn from the monumental work that was accomplished by the missionary enterprise in this regard. These health and educational institutions which were run by mission societies or churches were taken over by government ministries. The latter, however, with all the resources, have struggled to maintain the reputation and moral integrity of these institutions once held in high regard during the missionary period.

On the whole therefore, the five-fold ministry is a pregnant embodiment of power, authority and service. This is not without good reason. One striking element of missionary agencies is their indebtedness to the divine sanctioning. What can this mean to 'human' sanctioned institution such as the African Renaissance? It practically means that because Africans have a strong inclination to the dictates of a Supreme or divine voice, it requires of the proponents of the African Renaissance to search deep both in their souls and consciences in order for them to establish this missing dimension. The African awe for divinity is such that when *agency* is divine sanctioned it carries more authority and power. From this vantage point, therefore, the African Renaissance agents can then determine for themselves which type of agency along the nature of the five-fold ministries is appropriate, for what task, time, place and situation. I am convinced therefore that there can possibly arise out of this

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<sup>109</sup> Saayman (2007:73) notes how policy making from the 1950s was an intricate business of church and Apartheid government, since the boundary between the two institutions was very thin and highly permeable.



model (corporately) or models (individually) an enduring agency that exceeds limitations prescribed by human choice, geographic locality and age.

However, any agency with all its best intensions that operates without taking the context seriously is bound to experience frustrations and possible failure. Since this is an important Missiological consideration I then find it necessary to discuss *contextual understanding* in the next paragraph.

## **6.4 Contextual understanding**

My understanding of Missiology requires that I take *context* seriously. It is for this reason that I have devoted two chapters (Chapters Two & Three) of this thesis towards trying to understand the African Renaissance debate within its context. I have based the exercise on the many viewpoints suggested by authors, media and the advocates of the movement itself. In this chapter I want to indicate the way in which Christianity, Christian communities and Christian Missiology may contribute to an understanding of the various African contexts, in this way unfold the third petal of the matrix 'flower'. Let me start by envisioning the 'shape of a new Africa'.

### **6.4.1 The shape of the new Africa**

In fathoming a new-shape Africa a brief rehearsal of the old is necessary. Unless a new set of ideas and tools are applied the ultimate reborn Africa will continue to be determined by its past. This past is determined the legacy left by different colonial systems as inherited by various African states. Another would be the conflicting economic systems operating in many countries. These are the results of various partnerships many countries have created for themselves, or systems imposed by fiduciary obligations thrust upon them by their debtors, or the result of selfish interests of African leaders who entered into questionable dealings with whoever who promised them protection against losing power, influence and riches.

From a different perspective, different religious convictions have also played a major role in the divisive history of Africa. For instance, the introduction of Islamic 'Shari 'a' laws in countries such as Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia, has created an atmosphere with a great potential for violent conflict. I therefore ask, "What then could be a political system that can forge enough consensus and general agreement across the length and breadth of the continent?"

An important point to note here is that I am not proposing a simplistic solution: "let us all just share the same faith convictions, and all will be well". No, in proposing a Missiological dimension, I am rather proposing that the 'tried and tested' resources used in diagnosing contexts, conflicts and other problems, and has helped in providing solutions in the Christian communities should be conscientiously utilised. Foremost let us deal with paralysing and inhibiting effects of transformation:

#### ***6.4.1.1 Dealing with 'glasshouse-phobia' and 'moral arrogance'***

One of the theories of transformation contends that 'you cannot change what you dare not confront'. The political scene in Africa is rife with self-conceited politicians who are prone to high handed methods of dealing with criticism and dissent. The general situation in Africa is that many political leaders have skeletons in their cupboards.

The foregoing statement persuades me to suggest that many politicians or governments being guilty of atrocious acts of their own, they are therefore apprehensive of pointing a finger at their counterparts. I call this behaviour among African political leaders a 'Glasshouse-phobia'. It stems from their vulnerability to scrutiny and their apparent brittle reaction and tendency to media scrutiny and other interrogators. It is self-evident that such leaders will not welcome any peer review mechanism as it may appear in the end as an act of 'throwing a stone' and thus potentially denting their integrity, subsequently 'harming' their sovereignty. It is not surprising for such leaders and their cohorts to accuse their critics of moral arrogance when they are showed their mistakes. For instance, when President Jacob Zuma was accused of fraud, sexual misconduct, and inappropriate marital conduct by critics the

African National Congress, his political party, quickly jumped to his defence, viewing any criticism as an act of trying to shutter his political integrity and the his chances to become the next president of the party and subsequently the country. Nevertheless, the ANC elected him as its next president and the proceeded to propose his name as a candidate for the country's presidency. When former Archbishop Tutu publicly opposed such a nomination on moral grounds, the ANC and other supporters of Mr Zuma lambasted him for placing himself on a 'high moral ground'. I presume as I indicated under prophetic responsibility of the servants of God, Archbishop Tutu was duty bound by his faith principles to voice objection.

I now ask, what other African country's statesmen would raise objections to their counterparts on moral grounds? I suppose very few if not none. A clear cut case is South Africa's neighbour, Zimbabwe. It is because of the 'glasshouse-phobia' that peace and stability in Zimbabwe are elusive. Although many atrocities are committed by the government of President Mugabe in Zimbabwe and have been documented<sup>110</sup>, no Southern African leaders (with the exception of President Ian Kgama of Botswana) are willing to clearly voice their criticism and support the opposition parties, even after the opposition won parliamentary elections. The only credible explanation for this conduct is their fear of other leaders criticising them later should they be found to be on the wrongdoing. Biblical history provides us with many examples where self-righteous leaders were called to order (as I have indicated in the paragraph on prophetic ministry). Christianity therefore has many precedents on the effectiveness of communities opposing injustice and oppression when relevant bodies are unwilling or unable to do so. This is a possible valuable tool with which the establishment of an African Renaissance can be promoted.

#### **6.4.1.2 Apathy and hope**

An overview of the African context has revealed many hostile factors that tend to petrify many activists for justice and democracy. Communities which have suffered

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<sup>110</sup> For example, there are nine infamous operations, among which are the following: Operation Murambatsvina ([English: Operation Drive Out Trash](#)), Operation Mavhoterapapi; Operation Dzikisai Madhishi, etc. (cf. [en.wikipedia](#) for primary sources).

much violence and war tend to become docile and without hope. The memories of atrocities committed during the war and the actual mental and physical wounds of the victims are enough to create such hopelessness. Sadly, this condition only favours perpetrators who are determined to continue their reign of terror. That is why in post-war countries programs for healing of memories are very important. It is such programs such as the one initiated by Father Michael Lapsley<sup>111</sup>, an Anglican priest and an anti-Apartheid activist. Father Lapsley is himself a survivor of a letter-bomb murder attempt, which unfortunately left him with the loss of an eye and a hand.

Unlike Lapsley many survivors refuse to do anything to engage the current authorities for betterment of the situation of the people. Some also lapse into inactivity because of fear induced by the machinery of state suppression. Governments that are susceptible to criticism have created through their own intelligence services suppression and reprisal mechanisms. For example, it is believed that the downfall of Father Pius Ncube<sup>112</sup> of Zimbabwe was a government sponsored ploy. The result was that one vocal opponent who as a church leader had 'moral legitimacy' to challenge abuse of power was effectively silenced.

There is, however, a glimmer of hope for Africa. The call for an African Renaissance was in itself this hope that the people of Africa cherish and envisage its success. The political leaders who have enjoined their efforts and resources have as it were created a sense of hope in many parts of Africa. This can be deduced from many articles and a growing number of research work and books since the concept of African Renaissance 'resurfaced' particularly during the presidential era of Mr Mbeki. Several international conferences have been staged on the African soil, emphasising the possibilities for 'rebirth'. Arguably, the crown of these events is the staging of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup in South Africa. These are but big steps in boosting the confidence of Africans on their ability to meet the international communities' expectations. But they have not yet achieved complete trust.

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. <http://www.healingofmemories.co.za/> accessed 14/06/2010.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. <http://www.zimnetradio.com> accessed 14/06/2010.

When one considers the efforts of sustaining the African Renaissance dream, the argument still holds that these efforts can be handsomely complemented by introducing a spiritual dimension, which I reckon is missing in the whole debate of the renewal of Africa. *Hope*, which apostle Paul espouses together with faith and love, is one of the three core values of the Christian gospel (1 Cor.13:13). Christianity itself is characterised by eschatological hope of the return of Jesus Christ to introduce a new era (cf. Chapt.5). The Christian gospel does not proclaim a false and baseless optimism which cannot stand the test of time; it proclaims hope based on a long history of God's faithfulness, love and providence for his people and the earth. By adding the sentiments of the Missiological dimension the growing sense of hope for the realisation of the African Renaissance can be strengthened.

#### **6.4.1.3 Gross disparities**

As I have argued above, the African context is characterised by gross disparities of many kinds. One of the most serious disparities of Africa is the gap between the rich and the poor. This is found in both the affluent and the poor countries. South Africa an affluent country presents a typical example of a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Historically this was as a result of the apartheid policy of the previous regime. But currently, a new black middle class is on the rise. This growing disparity happens despite a constitution which is designed to help the general population to improve their economic conditions. Obviously there are problems at the point of application of these laws.

A closer look at why these disparities continue unabated reveals two trends. On the one hand the powerful and the influential have always maneuvered their way, even by corrupt means or nepotism, towards accessing these opportunities. At another level, the majority of people have not as yet acquired skills and levels of education necessary to help them access specialised skills. This condition accounts for the apparent huge lists of advertisements of jobs which seem never to be filled for lack of qualifying candidates. What is actually happening is job-hopping from one opportunity to the other by the privileged few who are sufficiently skilled. In the end the

unemployment rate remains relatively static or on the decline when the economy takes a down swing.

On the other hand, blame is levelled at the general population for failing to take advantage of these opportunities. A popular perception has placed blame at the inability of people to access advertisements because they are placed in the media which most people cannot afford or access, for example, on the internet; other reasons are the inability of people to create job opportunities themselves based on the services required to address existing needs in their communities. Lastly, there is also the unfortunate blame placed on people for being lazy and/or suffering from dependency syndrome, or incapacity to think creatively and initiating solutions to known problems in the communities. The latter reasons surfaced especially during the xenophobia attacks in South Africa where reports revealed that local people accused foreign nationals of 'stealing' their jobs or opportunistically occupying 'their' business spaces. African Renaissance has a mammoth task in dealing with these challenges whether real or perceived.

The Christian gospel with its teaching of inherent equality of people, and the sharing of resources, can make an important contribution. Liberation Theology teaches about God's "preferential option for the poor"<sup>113</sup> (Saayman 2008: 8) which is an absolute prerequisite for the situation in Africa, where the political and economic power brokers so often selfishly amass opportunities and riches for themselves, their relatives and/or clan members. Unless this tendency is effectively addressed, the ideals of the African Renaissance will continue to fall victim to these gross disparities. What would then be a Missiological contribution towards remedying the problems mentioned here above? I discuss these in the next paragraph.

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<sup>113</sup> The phrase was coined by Catholic scholars who observed in the Old and New Testaments that God was inclined towards the marginalized, especially the poor. (Christianity Today, 13 Nov., 1995, p.52.)

## 6.4.2 A Missiological contribution towards an African Renaissance

### 6.4.2.1 Understanding 'social' and 'physical' spaces

In the previous paragraph I have presented a worrying picture about Africa. This will serve as a good background to the Missiological dimension I am advancing in this paragraph. An example of the important contribution a Missiological dimension can make is a set of *urban mission* modules<sup>114</sup> taught in the Department of Missiology at Unisa. The modules are offered in collaboration with the Institute for Urban Ministry<sup>115</sup> which also teaches modules as part of several other urban mission programs in the city of Tshwane. The modules are offered at different levels, from entry to advanced level. These are UMM111-F: Doing theology in the city (first level), UMM301-K: Understanding urban contexts and UMM302-L: Developing urban ministries (second level) and UMM303-L A research urban project (advanced level). A masters' programme in Urban Theology is also available. The skills acquired in module UMM301-K, Understanding urban contexts, enables one to map out and analyse, on the one hand, 'social space' which is very important in matters pertaining to people and their everyday life patterns, and on the other hand, 'physical space' which is important for matters pertaining to their geographical settings. I now in the next paragraphs discuss these *spaces* individually, starting with the *social* space.

### 6.4.2.2 A Missiological understanding of 'social space'

One of the critical indicators the module attempts to achieve is finding 'power icons' in the 'social space'. These power icons play either positive or negative roles. On the negative side, there are people with bad influence on the life of community. They include gangsters, drug lords, bank-heist kingpins, shebeen queens and kings, etc. And on the positive side they include ministries of the Gospel, religious institutions, social transformation agents, health awareness activists, and numerous "anti-something" activists some of whom campaign against drug-trafficking, human-

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<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately the modules are in the process of being phased out because of rationalisation taking place in the university.

<sup>115</sup> IUM is a teaching division of Tshwane Leadership Foundation, a collaborative of a few churches with a mission to the homeless, HIV/Aids victims, and other relief ministries.

trafficking, child and women abuse, including “pro-something” activists, some of whom campaign for “love-life” (encouraging a positive sex free or responsible sex life among the youth), or “Lifeline” (which encourages people to ventilate their problems and make choice *for* life instead of choosing suicide. Local government officials and other office bearers, including the police and soldiers, for instance, are other important agents in the social sphere. Indeed, determining the existence and positioning of these role players and the influence they have on the community helps agents of transformation to understand dynamics under which they should operate and what types of interventions they need work out using the matrix’s different dimensions.

#### **6.4.2.3 A Missiological understanding of the ‘physical space’**

The physical space is another important dimension which impacts on how communities are either left vulnerable or enabled against negative forces operating in the community. In this respect infrastructure plays an important role in matters of health, education and safety. For instance, roads which have no streetlamps, are conducive to burglary and robbery; poor or lack of sanitation infrastructure make the community vulnerable to airborne and waterborne diseases. In carrying out effective ministries churches are encouraged to make their own mapping of their communities and to engage all concerned ‘power icons’ using ‘spiritual’ tools (cf. Paul’s appeal to the use of ‘spiritual armoury’ against forces of darkness (Eph. 6:10ff)).

A movement called *City Transformations* was initiated in the first part of 1999 to utilize such a planning-and-implementation method. It was based on research conducted by George Otis, Jr. and his Sentinel Group on several cities and local communities from 1995 (Hoard s.n.). Otis was himself a partner with C. Peter Wagner in the program called “AD2000 Prayer Track”. Otis released a video called *Transformations* which presented four scenarios where Christians mobilised their local communities through intense periods of prayer and fasting, and massive gatherings of public campaigns in which there was radical transformation in the targeted communities. In investigating the spiritual pathology of these communities, in the process known as, ‘epidemiological surveillance’ or, as preferred by the Sentinel



Group, 'spiritual mapping', the evidence gathered revealed that drug cartels disintegrated, witchcraft and cult activity diminished, corrupt officials were replaced by Christians, multi-generation street gangs were converted, bars and jails closed, failing businesses and school systems were revived, previously unproductive fields yielded bounteous harvest, and local churches saw unprecedented growth (Hoard n.d.)<sup>116</sup>. It was in the light of this movement and video campaign that saw similar movements established in many parts of the world. In South Africa most cities have each a chapter of their own *Transformations*, for example "Transforming Tshwane"<sup>117</sup>, which is an interdenominational movement which seeks to transform Tshwane along the same principles of *Transformations*.

The African Renaissance movement can by collaborating with the Christian community, be assured of a dynamic force that is existing and is already at work in its own way to change communities. Social and political bodies do not always have to reinvent the wheel. The faith community has established strategies, infrastructure and personnel. It has also won the confidence of the local people, so that African Renaissance movement only needs to cooperate in delivering the 'goods'. This is obviously a negotiated space because faith communities operate on a set of moral principles which are not necessarily agreeable with those of political, commercial or civic agents.

#### 6.4.3 Environmental degradation and missions

A post-colonial Africa has been rumoured for its continual slide to oblivion. It cannot be denied that in many parts of Africa where great European architecture stood now remains a sorrow sight of dilapidated structures because of neglect or inability to maintain them. Slums are developing in previously beautiful cities as squalor, dilapidation and stench set in. Many factories lay obsolete because the machinery there required specialised skills not available among the locals. These may be taken from a macroscopic view, but on a smaller but accumulative scale, for example, in

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<sup>116</sup> A follow-up video on further testimonies, *Transformations II: The Glory Spreads*, was released in 2001.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. <http://transformingtshwane.co.za/> accessed 28/06/2010.

schools the damage of desks, defacing of walls, stealing of light switches and wall plugs, breaking of windows, the littering of paper, plastic and fruit peelings and countless more suchlike incidents begin to define the mentality of the community that is in the making, especially if such incidents go unchecked or are regarded as trivial. Hips of rubbish with swarm of flies, is one of the loathsome sights in many parts of African cities. If the mindset of the local people is such that there is no itch or pain throwing papers out of moving cars, trashing pavements, filling air with foul smell of burning rubbish some of which is environmentally hazardous it only helps to describe how Africans view or want to see their landscapes, valleys, rivers and hillsides. The abovementioned depictions of degradation are but only to physical conditions.

There are also those which are abstract or metaphysical, such as existing systems of education, health and economy. The 'quality' of these systems has been under scrutiny for what they purport to deliver. In this regard the debate has always been whether the Eurocentric systems of education, health and economy should have been maintained as given or should have been replaced by those which are Afrocentric. A biblical metaphor of David's battle armour (a sling, a bag and stones) in confronting Goliath, over against King Saul's suggested battle armour (a conventional armoury of a coat of armour and a bronze helmet) has often been used to illustrate the clash between the use of familiar local concepts as opposed to foreign ones. David finally resorted to what he knew and could use best (1Sam.17:38-39). African Renaissance has to contend with these questions and do so in consideration of the challenges of globalisation. I cannot stop at the proverbial 'crossroads of the ancient and the new' (Jer.6:16); I need to continue looking for signs of hope. The next paragraph provides a message of *transformation of the context* for Africa from a Missiological point of view.

#### 6.4.4 Transformation of the context: Going to the 'valley of bones'

The drama of the Spirit of the Lord taking Ezekiel to the 'valley of bones' (Ezek. 37:1ff) and taking him to and fro through this valley could possibly been a traumatic experience and portrayal of death in its absolute sense. The dialogue on whether the bones could come to life is then a quest to a 'life after death' that can only be

achieved by a transcendental power of a Creator. The Ezekiel episode has often been metaphorically applied to situations of helplessness and despair. Some contexts in Africa can, by human judgement, be likened to this sense of hopelessness. It is just trust in God's sovereignty that by his intervention situations can change. But God requires human agency with skills to assess correctly the extent of 'dryness' of the situation. This should be an agent, and especially an indigenous agent, who will rise to the occasion and 'prophecy' life into the bones. There is a common tendency by many local people to walk away from the valley of dry bones instead of staying in and be 'at work' with God where God is progressively bringing back life until 'flesh' is restored and the 'Spirit' has blown through the 'embodied' bones<sup>118</sup>. I have already discussed the issue of 'brain drain' above. But there are several prophets of doom who instead of prophesying life, would blow out fledgling flames of hope and speak doom and death. South Africa has had a big share of these prophets in the post-Apartheid time. They claim that the country will go down like most African states. Furthermore, transformation is about skills and skills-transfer.

#### 6.4.5 **Transfer of skills and missions**

Another dimension of transformation in the situation of need and desperation can be derived from the Cornelius episode (Acts 10:1ff), where in a vision he receives an invitation "to come over". This invitation and its subsequent acceptance by Peter demonstrates how, by God's guidance, a local people set out to seek for 'appropriate' help for a domestic situation that required a solution. In this encounter as Peter edifies the local people, the Holy Spirit descends on them.

In applying this event to Africa I need to recognise that Africans in many respects need the expertise, skills and technologies that only other nationalities or expatriates have or monopolise. It is not helpful to create impressions, attitudes and conditions that isolate Africa from the developments in which other nations are advancing in faculties of humanities, sciences, technologies, sports and recreation. That is why

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<sup>118</sup> In a spur of the moment, Archbishop Tutu once threatened to leave South Africa; it was out of exasperation at the 'necklacing' (killing by putting a motor tyre around a person's neck and setting it alight) of dissidents and supporters of the apartheid regime; but he soon retracted the statement.

Bishop Federico Pagura's<sup>119</sup> stern calling, "Missionary, go home...or stay!" (in Anderson & Stransky 1974<sup>120</sup>) should be taken seriously. Pagura demands:

Missionary go home: For it is time to go home. But if you are ready to bear the risks and pains of the hour of birth which our peoples are experiencing, if you begin to celebrate with them the happiness of sensing that the Gospel is proclamation and affirmation of hope and liberation which are already transforming history, if you are ready to give more of your life in the service of these peoples who are awaking, then: Stay. There is much to do.

Pagura's call should be seen in the light of the impartation and empowerment missionaries should do to their host communities, rather than create hegemonies that do not transfer skills and resources. Understanding context therefore requires Africans determining for themselves their needs, allowing an 'outsider' constructive criticism and then taking necessary remedial steps. This then takes me further into the next paragraph in which the church and mission agents place *themselves and* their history under scrutiny in dealing with national issues.

## 6.5 Ecclesial scrutiny

### 6.5.1 Recapping on the AR's neglect of Church and mission

I have already discussed the importance of religion in Africa in the previous chapters. I have underscored the role of spirituality and how it lies at the core of African thinking and doing. I want to reiterate that spirituality pervades all faculties of life. In this paragraph I want to take a closer look at the institutional church, especially as an integral part of the Missiological matrix scheme. I do so to highlight its usefulness in promoting the African Renaissance dream.

I do not have to repeat the observation I have amply made, namely that the church is regarded as peripheral by the proponents of the African Renaissance notion.

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<sup>119</sup> Federico Pagura was a Methodist Bishop in Costa Rico and former president of Latin American Council of Churches.

<sup>120</sup> Alternate source: [www.friendlyplanetnews.blogspot.com/](http://www.friendlyplanetnews.blogspot.com/) .

However, I wish to proceed here by looking at the history of mission and the church in terms of its having a hand in the socio-political affairs of the people of Africa and how this involvement had an impact on the quality of life of the people, especially at the grassroots level. I will then look at how this history influences the present situation, and subsequently make specific recommendations as a strategy for the way forward.

## **6.5.2 The role of the Church and mission**

### **6.5.2.1 Addressing the ambivalent history of the church in Africa**

The church's primary message according to the Great Commission is the Good News of Jesus Christ. This message is liberating and fulfilling in its purpose. But there are divergent opinions as to how this message has or should have been brought home to its recipients under various circumstances and political situations. One clear manifestation of the problem is the ambivalences that exist in mission history in specific contexts. I want to address here the ambivalent role the church played in Africa by taking as an example the church's role in South Africa.

The dubious role of the church was heightened especially in the last decades of the rule of the apartheid system ending with the democratic elections in 1994. This situation and the ambivalent role of the church is described clearly by the Kairos Document (Chapter One) which saw how different church traditions, in terms of their theological doctrine and racial bias, conducted their praxis and influenced their members under the influence of the socio-political climate of South Africa. Saayman notes in this regards that "churches which supported the *status quo* could be found in the Afrikaans Reformed family of churches, as well as among some smaller English-speaking churches" (Saayman 2008: 3-4). The question here is, 'What can this history tell me and how can it help me to steer the African Renaissance dream?' I argue that it is possible to find communities on the continent upholding divergent and opposing views as to the direction the continent should take in realising the vision conceived by protagonists of the African Renaissance.

How should these differing opinions be handled? Without doubt the history of the church's handling of conflicting views should inform holders of differing views in the African Renaissance discourse so that whatever differences there may be, these are not insurmountable. Stated otherwise, already in South Africa, many churches, denominations and faith formations which were opposed to each other along racial lines have begun reconciliation processes. A good example is the Dutch Reformed Church family which is still divided along racial lines and is still struggling to find unity. Another example is the Apostolic Faith Mission which has positively concluded a merger of its racially divided parts. It was not simple though. The concluded business of many of these mergers is not perfect, but it highlights the positive aspects of engaging your past and its contradictions and emerging with something all concerned parties can live with and profit from. In the same vein, the South African political role players who were radically opposed to each other engaged each other in a series of negotiations called the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa I and II footnote) paving the way for a new constitution and the first democratic elections in the history of this country. Despite apparent imperfections experienced in these processes, the parties finally came up with a political program that ushered in a new dispensation which popularly came to be known as the 'new South Africa' or 'democratic South Africa'.

#### ***6.5.2.2 Parochial interests, competitors and rivals in church and mission***

Churches are notorious for pursuing their own narrow agendas which contradict a universal agenda of the Bible, for example, the corporate unity of believers. It is noticeable across the continent how numerous joint church programs in terms of theological training, programs, sharing of buildings and other resources have been discontinued in the postcolonial era. This is partly because of the 'Missionary, go home!' sentiment which came with independence of African states, and the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist attitude among Africans that was focused sharply against the mission churches. Many donors and international missionary enterprises fostered collaborative efforts because of relationships that existed between the sending churches on their 'home soil'. But when the decolonisation process took its toll, these ties broke. Subsequently, the mission churches and other collaboratives felt no longer

obliged to stay in the relationships they had inherited. The result was that new independent church and para-church structures emerged. But these were weakened by their separations with the result that weaker ones just quickly fizzled away because of lack of human and material resources.

At another level, churches which previously cooperated under regional agreements, (e.g. the Reformed Church (“Dopper” or “Gereformeerde Kerk”) and the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA) had comity agreements whereby they divided the ‘mission field’ between themselves using geographical landmarks (Banda 1996:161). When their ‘mission churches’ became autonomous, these agreements fell through and were no longer recognised by their counterparts in the ‘Black’ churches. The unfortunate result was that these ‘Black’ churches became ‘competitors’ among themselves, freely taking each other’s members and ministers thus creating feelings of animosity.

The last scenario is that of rivals. In South Africa some churches enjoyed the privilege and the protection of the ‘radius rule’ created especially to protect mission churches (cf. Makhubu 1988:29). Under this arrangement, no new church could establish itself within the five mile radius of an existing church. The infringing church could be removed legally by law-enforcement agents. The ‘new’ South Africa opened a free-for-all situation where rivalry and hostility became possible. This was exacerbated by the new wave of American televangelists or their imitators. Under the banner of ‘salvation’ which characterised the unchurched and those in mainline churches as ‘unsaved’, they staged a conversion drive aimed at all except those identified as Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. In parts of the Christian world this created bitter conflicts and rivalry. Consequently, at local and regional levels where cooperation of churches, let alone of other faith formations, was desired, the opposite was the outcome. The question is, “What can the African Renaissance movement learn from these scenarios?” While this is negative, it is nevertheless an eye-opener as far as it points to the harm that such competition and rivalry causes in communities

that should live and work together. These bad practices serve to warn African Renaissance theorists and practitioners of what should be noted and avoided.

Many countries are difficult to be cured of parochial interests. But some of these countries had cordial relationships under the colonial era. For example, some countries were initially called 'British Protectorates' and accordingly had cordial working relationships. Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana are good examples. For instance, they shared one university for their students. But this arrangement gradually lost its original appeal. It is quite clear that with the 'binding' factor removed parochial interest took precedence. For the African Renaissance to succeed countries must find a lasting 'binding factor', a cure to selfish-interests. The same applies to harmful competition and rivalry between adjacent countries. The situation around the Great Lakes of Africa is that some countries assist rival factions and insurgents in the neighbouring country. This does not auger well for unity and the rebirth of a new Africa. Another worrying incident was the perceived leaning of former-President Mbeki towards President Mugabe while negotiating reconciliation among rival political parties that included the Movement for Democratic Change of Mr Tsvangirai.

Competition obviously occurs when there is vying for power and resources. Moreover, there is always pain and loss that goes with it, and in many instances it is self-destructive. Many theological writings provide resources that show that the Church has dealt with this problem for a long time and have developed skills and methods which may help to overcome narrow and self-serving interests. There is also a positive side of the churches and missionary bodies' dealings with each other, which I discuss in the next section.

### 6.5.3 **The Church's Missionary-missional<sup>121</sup> impact**

Despite the negative highlights discussed in the previous paragraphs, there are also ecclesial and missionary-missional experiences from which positive lessons for the African Renaissance enterprise can be drawn.

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<sup>121</sup> I deliberately use the joint term to emphasise an inclusive, integrated and comprehensive scope which both terms represent in terms of their respective schools of thought.



### **6.5.3.1 Kingdom mentality in Church and mission**

Church and mission are by design Kingdom oriented. They are called to proclaim the Kingdom or Reign of God which goes beyond denominational boundaries. Kingdom values are overarching and permeate all spheres of church's existence. Its ethos is not determined by church law or constitution. It lies in the activity of the Holy Spirit through agents of mission, to fulfill a higher calling that disregards church segregations (Paul vs Peter<sup>122</sup>), tradition, culture (circumcision<sup>123</sup>) or ritual (infant or adult baptism). The Spirit of the Lord operates where oneness of purpose and practice supersedes creed and physical distinction. African Renaissance needs an overarching philosophy that will help all to have a focal point that supersedes divisive constructs, whether they are abstract or physical; or, conceptual or practical. These should be fostered by the common good for all Africans. They should inspire a sense of accountability towards this common good; engender a protective spirit until it is achieved. Christ protects the vision of salvation through his 'power' (Acts 1:8<sup>124</sup>) and 'presence' (Mat. 28:20<sup>125</sup>). The African Renaissance movement should protect its vision and dream towards a reborn continent through structures of 'power' and 'presence' in the entirety of the continent. And like the thrust of the Kingdom of God the renaissance structures must be progressive and effective with definite signs of effectiveness (Mark 16:15<sup>126</sup>).

### **6.5.3.2 Missional enterprise**

The terms 'missional', 'Missional church' or 'Missional living' have in recent times gained popular use. Some Missiologists have even pitted them against the term 'missionary' which for unfortunate reasons has fallen out favour with some Missiologists because of the complex, sometimes sad, history of the missionary

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<sup>122</sup> Gal. 2:14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

<sup>123</sup> Gal. 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

<sup>124</sup> Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

<sup>125</sup> Mt 28:20 ... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

<sup>126</sup> Mk 16:15 ..., and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

enterprise. The proponents of the ‘missional theology’ argue that it is not so much that “the church has a mission” but rather that “the mission has a church”. Hirsch (2008), a missional activist, states that, “A missional theology is not content with mission being a church-based work. Rather, it applies to the whole life of every believer. Every disciple is to be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture”. Hirsch’s statement speaks to several theological questions which I cannot entertain here, except that of the role of every believer’s involvement in a movement. By pointing to ‘every disciple’ as an agent of the Kingdom of God he virtually describes the whole church as an organic movement of transformation.

The ‘missional’ conception is phenomenal when translated into the vision of the African Renaissance. It effectively places all the members of the African community as potential agents in the service of the ‘new Africa’ and its ideals. One important aspect of a ‘missional’ model, as opposed to the traditional ‘attractational model’ (Hirsch 2008) — which is described as basically centripetal, is ‘extracting people from a culture and assimilating them into the church’, thereby leaving the work to the clergy. But the missional model is dynamic, vibrant and not confined. This is an important Missiological element the African Renaissance can import.

### **6.5.3.3 African Initiated Churches<sup>127</sup> (AICs)**

One of the post-colonial forces on the African plane to be reckoned with was emergence of AICs. Arising from a history of suppression by mainline churches, they established themselves despite restrictions by government, some colluding with mainline churches and other external and internal (e.g., poverty and in-fighting) difficulties (Makhubu 1988: 30). They established a resilient spirituality that did not require a conceptual definition or formal legitimation. All campaigns through text book and indoctrination within formal educational systems could not deter the resolve of the forerunners of this movement. Until recently, the AICs were the fastest growing church movement in the world. Their success lies in that the culture and theology

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<sup>127</sup> The traditional or alternate name is the African Independent Churches.

they practised appealed to the soul, culture and spirituality of the African majority – it responded to their felt needs. As a church movement they did not try to convert the outlook of the African first before they won the African soul. Their language, approach, and concepts were simple and touched the grassroots. At the centre of the movement there is a thread that runs through all AIC formations which is identical, unmistakable and which binds them together. It is this secret of unity of identity that the African Renaissance movement should strive to discover and emulate. Currently the African Renaissance is enveloped in highly sophisticated<sup>128</sup> language of politics, economy and commerce that grassroots people do not understand. The fact is most, if not all, established African Renaissance institutions reside in the universities, for example, the Centre for African Renaissance Studies (CARS) at Unisa, and clearly they are inaccessible to the majority of aspiring people. All the African Renaissance vehicles need to learn from the simplicity, accessibility, modelling, packaging and delivery of the AICs.

#### **6.5.3.4 The Pentecostal-Charismatic movement**

The Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is arguably the fastest growing spiritual movement currently. This can be demonstrated by the ATLAS of Christianity which places the Christian focal point in Africa in Nigeria, where there are currently big and very influential Pentecostal-Charismatic movements and churches. The Nigerian churches, for instance, host some of the largest gatherings accounting for millions in a session of organised crusades. They have extended this ability to attract large crowds to other parts of the world such as in South Africa and England.

There are various opinions that try to establish the reason for this feat. Some think it owes its success to the use of electronic media, some think it is fervour of miracles and wonders; while others simply ascribe it to the forceful or alleged cunningness or persuasive nature of Nigerians. But it is not only Nigerians who are as successful in drawing crowds to their evangelistic gatherings; there are also other nationalities that

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<sup>128</sup> A good example of ‘sophistication’ was the initial method of acquiring Soccer World Cup tickets, through internet and bank applications. When that was modified to the ‘over-the-counter’ method used in local matches, tickets began to sell like hot-cakes sending Fifa computers crashing because of the influx.

attract such big crowds (for example, many televangelist meetings on DSTv bear witness to that). In general the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is 'blamed' by observers from mainline churches for a 'one-sided' gospel that talks of prosperity, healing miracles and prophecy.

Without offering a value judgment on the truthfulness of these allegations, a clear captivating strategy by the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement of such large followings is the promise and deliverance from people's conditions of need. Poverty and sickness and the inability to meet their daily needs by financial or medical means leaves many Africans with no other option but recourse in 'spiritual' help, which does not require any monetary advance as a condition for getting help. But unlike AICs, who also offer similar services, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement can advertise their campaigns well and do not operate by familial expansion as AICs do, but call all and sundry to their meetings.

Does the African Renaissance promise to meet the needs of the people, such as, food, housing, jobs, and health? Any failure to state in no uncertain terms the promise to provide such basic services and needs is bound to appeal only to those interested in abstract commodities, namely, researchers, academics and writers. The majority of African people want issues that talk to the lowest rank of needs as stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

#### **6.5.3.5 Church's use of the power of Multimedia**

The use of multimedia (Radio, TV, Cellphone and Internet) in Africa is a fairly recent phenomenon. The use of radio and television in other parts of the world had long started before it began to make its mark on the African continent. The intensity of its use accelerated even further when the internet was introduced. The provision of Christian channels and programmes around the clock, on a daily basis, by the Trinity Broadcasting Network through Digital Satellite Television (DSTv) and its counterpart free 'Public' satellite Christian channels has revolutionised the spread of the Christian gospel (and other religions, such as Islam and Judaism) even further. The mobile phone technology is the latest addition to these innovative outreach methods. Many

of the churches, of which the majority belong to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, that use these media, have mushroomed from a few members in number to several hundreds or thousands in a relatively short space of time. Some of them started with the local pastor broadcasting programmes that are recorded in a study room, every time ending with an invitation to a church service at a particular address and venue. Then after several broadcasts the same pastor was doing the programmes in live church services. With subsequent services a noticeable growth of members could be observed. Such progressive growth and influence is phenomenal and cannot be ignored.

In Africa these media, especially radio and television, have been used effectively by political states and their rivals for spreading propaganda. For example, the tragic genocide in Rwanda was planned and orchestrated mainly through radio broadcasts. It is therefore no wonder why radio and television stations are among the first to be targeted in events of military coups. Considering the immense impact that these communication facilities can provide, it is necessary for African Renaissance strategists to have a deliberate *modus operandi* that focuses on deploying them for campaigning, dissemination of information and the running of programmes and services of the movement's mission.

I have, in a nutshell, demonstrated that Christian communities' important contribution to human life is its strong faith dimension, which is a case I am building over against the apparent omission by the African Renaissance proponents. Furthermore, the Christian communities possess skills and technical abilities which can best compare with those used in other sectors, including commerce and industry. I can therefore conclude that the African Renaissance movement cannot ignore such a force on its agenda it wants to achieve success. But there are also other critical underlying theoretical considerations that inspire Christian disposition and action. These can be found in how Christians do theology. I therefore discuss next, 'theological interpretation' as an important matrix point towards making the puzzle of theory and practice sensible.

## **6.6 Theological interpretation**

In this fifth 'petal' of the 'flower matrix' I explore the importance of theological interpretation. My premise is that there are many ways of reading the Bible. The theological lenses I put on determine how I view different contexts. The resulting images I thus acquire determine the responses I develop and the tools I employ in engaging these contexts. It stands to reason that with a long history of doing theology, there are numerous theological traditions. Some of these theological strands include Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, and most recently, Pentecostalism and new charismatic religious movements. It is not within the scope of this chapter to delve into these theological traditions. Rather, my exercise here is to look at the broad theological issues and the consequent impact these forms of doing theology have on the lives of people and their communities, and in particular, on the African people. It is important to establish this so that I can determine in what possible ways the large African Christian communities can assist in realising the African Renaissance, or where theological views will have to change in order to make them useful to the African Renaissance.

### **6.6.1 General theological issues**

It cannot be denied that most, if not all, theological traditions have over periods of time developed ways to propagate their ideas to other interest groups. One form of propagation has been through the training of agents. This training, whether formal or informal, lies at the centre of theological interpretation and propagation. Jesus' charge on the apostles to "teach them these things" (Mt.28:19) effectively opened a trend in which Christians found the obligations to 'pass on' the teachings of Jesus to following generations. I am thus aware of the fact that from the Apostolic era to the era of the Apostolic Fathers many divergent teachings crept in setting off the need to 'formalise' the teachings of Jesus in the forms of creeds and doctrines<sup>129</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> For example, the Apostle's Creed and the Doctrine of the Trinity.

These developments help me to realise how propagation of ideas and concepts is important for the survival of a 'movement', in this case Christianity. Not only that, but that these concepts were and still are formulated into 'schools of thought' that are passed on in the form of discipleship among ordinary members or ministerial formation for the clergy. The teachings convey specific messages and influence adherents in a particular way in their thinking and doing. The following are examples of these ways of Biblical reading and theological interpretation:

### 6.6.2 **Error committed 'In the name of the Lord...'**

There is a tendency among theologians, including preachers or writers, to take, on the one hand, a simplistic, Biblicist or fundamentalist approach to biblical interpretation. On the other hand, there are those who take learned, scholarly or even skeptical approach to doing theology. These different ways of doing theology, therefore have resulted in many different classifications of theological methodologies. It is no surprise therefore to find some biblical scholars who want to accept theological assertions based on what they view as 'the true word of God'. This has caused serious divisions among theological practitioners, with one group accusing another of abusing the Bible or Biblical interpretation for impure motives. In the end stereotypes are created. Some of the possible stereotypes include, 1) justifying prejudices or doctrines that are based on ignorance, 2) unwillingness to rethink one's attitude and behaviour towards a stereotyped group, and 3) preventing people who belong to stereotyped group to participate in own activities. For an example, most members of Charismatic-Pentecostal movement will not likely to cooperate with members of African Traditional Religions, including diviners, for fear of attracting demonic spirits. Some stereotypes exist across different religions, for example, between members of Islam and Christianity.

### 6.6.3 **Self-centered and self-serving ministries**

In recent years it has become common practice for various Christian formations to speak of 'ministries' instead of 'churches' or 'missions'. This is not simply a change in terminology but indicates a change also in practice. Although some ministries operate within confines of their respective churches, many do not. They are independent and

often bear the personal name(s) of their founders. An overview about these ministries points to the fact that they are mushrooming everywhere. Some have acquired stature of pomp and splendour. The character of their theology is classified under 'prosperity gospel' or a 'prosperity cult'. They have developed a language that is unique to the movement, such as, 'Come, expecting a miracle!', 'He ain't got me this far to leave me now!', and 'He will never leave you nor forsake you'. These phrases are important in that they serve as 'anchors' for members during trying times, and fill them with a sense of hope and ultimate victory.

Furthermore, these ministries, on the surface, seem or at least claim to serve the Lord and meet the spiritual needs of the people who throng their pews. But there are many reports that attest to bizarre self-serving activities. An overall assessment is that, even as many members find compelling reasons to belong to the ministries, many members feel hard done. They find themselves kept on the 'leash of hope' without receiving answers. There is a clear need for presenting a holistic gospel that gives a balanced view of life and the Gospel. The Bible also teaches trials and suffering as necessary elements towards building patience and endurance. It also states the benefit of these in material terms like it happened to Job.

#### 6.6.4 **Superficial and non-critical theology**

There have recently been proliferations of independent churches in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa. These as mentioned above are mainly of a neo-Pentecostal/charismatic type. Many of them are creations of young pastors who have broken away from existing churches or 'ministries'. Many of these ministers have not received any formal theological training or have started doing so after 'ordination'<sup>130</sup>. Some publicly argue that they operate and preach under direct guidance of the Holy Spirit who is the 'Teacher' *par excellence* and therefore do not need any theological training. On listening to their teaching, though, it is not amazing to find 'sensationalism' and 'dramatisation' that does not do justice to the text, its historical

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<sup>130</sup> This is almost 'self-ordination' as it is not subjected to scrutiny of any supervision or overseeing by an external body.



and its interpretative meaning. Unfortunately, the huge number of their followers is continually exposed to a watered down gospel at each worship service. History has shown that it is these conditions that are a fertile ground for fanaticism and establishment of apocalyptic sects.

### **6.6.5 Ways of reading the Bible**

I have earlier on indicated that theological interpretation is influenced by the kind of backgrounds from which I come and the kind of interest I have. For example, Kritzinger (1998:46) points to popular 'different life interests' among Christians, namely, social justice, church growth and individual salvation. These readings all tend to be reductionist in outlook if applied in isolation of each other. He also adds to the list the 'feminist reading of the Bible'. This reading an important form of reading that is advanced by people, especially women, who are critical of those people who use the Bible to perpetuate patriarchal tendencies and oppression of women. They are therefore suspicious of patriarchal features of the Bible and question the way women are portrayed as dormant, silent and submissive even in incidents that warrant a corrective vocal response or active presence. In the next paragraph I will discuss Gerald West's suggested three ways of reading the Bible, namely, 'behind the text', 'in the text' and 'in front of the text', which Kritzinger finds liberating and doing justice to the text.

#### **6.6.5.1 Behind the text**

In this reading, the Biblical text is reconstructed on the basis of its content and other related texts. Fundamental differences and agreements are noted and conclusions derived on the same basis. For example, West (in Kritzinger 1998:47) argues that the pastoral letters 1Timothy and Titus present a sociological structure that is hierarchical. He compares them with other letters of Paul which he argues present to believers an egalitarian sociological structure. On these findings West suggests that pastoral letters were written much later by a Christian leader who wrote under the influence of the existing Graeco-Roman household systems then.

### **6.6.5.2 *The text itself***

In this reading, West (in Kritzinger 1998:48-49) takes the text as a given and analyses the etymologies, the grammar and the proverbial language that issues from the text itself. He argues that biblical authors, especially in the New Testament, quote and affirm earlier biblical authors. However, he expresses reservation to what he views as “wrong or inappropriate” and “obviously wrong” interpretation by some of them. He cites as an example the thesis of ‘man and woman’ and ‘male and female’ in 1 Tim. 2:9-15 and Gen. 2:4b-3:24. He finds 1 Timothy as ‘patriarchal and objectionable’, Gen. 2:21 as ‘sexually undifferentiated’, and Gen.1:27 as ‘egalitarian’. West’s interpretations provide readers with a good example of what I stated above, namely, misreading a text or doing non-critical reading of a text. I hereby reiterate the importance and the function of theological interpretation that is based on critical readings of a biblical text that comes from a different era and milieu.

### **6.6.5.3 *In front of the text***

In the third type of reading, West (in Kritzinger 1998:49-50) encourages the reader to look at the ‘bigger picture’ and find the heart of the message. For instance he argues that since 1 Tim. 2:9-12 goes against the main message of 1 Timothy and the Bible as a whole, it should be ‘decontextualised’ out of its patriarchal setting of the first century Mediterranean culture and ‘recontextualised’ in today’s culture. By so doing this will afford women the right to serve fully as disciples and ministers in the household of God. This is obviously a ‘radical’ reading of the Bible in that readers are called to ‘question’ the text as it stands and appropriate it for their own use. This exercise should be based on the overall message of the pericope or the Bible rather than on the narrow literal meaning.

The skills of reading the biblical text as described above suggests the need for African Renaissance participants to have skills to read histories and contexts employing different tools of reading and interpretation. Perhaps the current re-reading of South African history is inspired by the knowledge that colonial texts while purporting to transmit historical facts are heavily tainted with colonial and imperial

biases that favour certain stereotypes. The History books in the Bantu Education system of apartheid South Africa taught that Whites were first humans to reach the most southern parts of Africa. This was intended to lay false claim to Whites' legitimacy to the land, especially the Western Cape. It was only against the re-reading of this history using 'liberating' interpretative and corrective tools that manipulation of historical facts could be revealed and records set straight.

#### 6.6.6 **Missionary praxis: a Lifelong learning endeavour.**

Theological interpretation according to the seven-petal flower matrix is outcomes based. It seeks to create theological messages and actions that are sustainable. Such theologies are not steeped in theories only but find expression in actions too. These actions are the deliberate result of the text-design that does not just offer 'lip-service' but meaningfully engage life-issues through activities that arise from critical inquiry into the Word and its meaning. To this end I employ the concept of 'Lifelong learning'<sup>131</sup>. Lifelong learning, also known as 'LLL', is the "lifelong, lifewide, voluntary, and self-motivated" way of existence, which is defined as a "pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. Lifelong learning does not only enhance social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development, but also competitiveness and employability" (Wikipedia 2010/Lifelong learning). The importance of this concept is that it is not confined to the 'brick-and-mortar' educational system, namely, formal institutions, but is acquired by other non-formal means. It is this mode of education as practised by Jesus that surprised the Temple authorities about the apostles' impressive command of knowledge and debate<sup>132</sup>. This temple experience and the rest of the foregoing debate on *theological interpretation* prompt me to put this discussion in terms of the African Renaissance to its logical conclusion, in the next paragraph.

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<sup>131</sup> The concept was adopted as part of Outcomes Based Education in Missiology to impress on the integrated nature of the Missionary praxis.

<sup>132</sup> Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

### 6.6.7 Theology and the call for an African Renaissance

From what I have said above, it is clear that the Christian communities in Africa can make a positive contribution to the call for an African Renaissance by way of theological praxis. This can be seen in the way African Christians have initiated environmental conservation projects that are based on theological understanding (see paragraph 6.7.2.1).

The call for an African Renaissance is at the same time a call to the Christian communities for theological renewal. This renewal should be sought in the first place in terms of socio-economic interventions. As I have stated earlier in the thesis, Christians make up a major component of the citizens of African countries, especially in the Western, Southern and Central areas of the continent. Yet they do not exert a commensurate socio-economic influence. Why is this so? The majority of Christian communities still have to deal very urgently, for example, with their preoccupation with the prosperity gospel or cult. It is not far-fetched to claim that this striving for personal prosperity on the basis of the belief that “it is God’s will” feeds into the serious corruption which is eating away like a cancer in the African body corporate. For example many of the new mega churches place emphasis on the culture of ‘individualism’ rather than the ‘collectivism’ of *Ubuntu*. Many of the ‘prosperous’ mega-churches are not good stewards of the believers offerings in the manner of the prototype church in Acts 2, 4 and 5.

In this paragraph on ‘theological interpretation’ I have demonstrated the integration of the different elements of the Missionary praxis as modelled on the flower matrix. I have underscored the importance of theological interpretation as an essential element of Missionary praxis, indicating where it may be useful, as well as areas requiring urgent change. The examples of flawed theological praxis, unfortunate ways of being church and the need for context based lifelong learning, are important lessons for the call for an African Renaissance. These are some of the mistakes to be avoided. In the next paragraph I proceed to focus on the sixth petal of the flower matrix, namely, ‘strategic planning’.

## **6.7 Strategic planning**

In this section I look at the sixth dimension of the matrix that calls for planning with a view to effective action. In this section therefore I should remind us of those programs that are aimed at establishing God's reign in the midst of the people. I will critically look into the planning that has gone into these programs and their execution. I will do these mindful of the fact that these plans and programs are African Renaissance's *raison d'être*. Thereafter, I will indicate how the African Renaissance movement can benefit from missionary practice and its methods. Part of the exercise will be to demonstrate how Christian communities can get involved in adding value to the African Renaissance.

### **6.7.1 Methods, activities and projects**

The faith community has established itself as a unique socio-economic entity with definite characteristics. In seeking viable modes and models for Africa's development, the renaissance movement needs to utilise the valuable resources available in the church and its subsidiary structures. The church's success in terms of what it has achieved in serving humanity, both believers and unbelievers, cannot be ascribed to its soul-winning activities only. This would be a one-sided view and understanding of what the church is and stands for. It is the overall activities of the Church, both in word and deed that have appealed to the minds and hearts of its respondents. Over the ages the church has 'perfected' some of these words and actions, into effective methods, activities and projects that were duplicated over the years and across the continents. I want to explore these methods, activities and projects with a view to the African Renaissance.

#### **6.7.1.1 Methods**

In missions the subject of methods is often paired with the concept of motives. Motives are further viewed as 'pure' or 'impure'. The motive that stands central to most mission agents is that which is given by the Lord, Jesus Christ, namely, 'making

disciples'. This is regarded as a 'pure' motive. It is therefore my basic assumption that all 'pure' motives will be based on the *missio Dei* concept. This means it is Christ who sends the church in to the world just as the Father has sent him.

The Church has responded to this sending in different ways. These responses have created *types* of churches according to how they have understood the *missio Dei*. Roozen, McKinney and Carrol in Kritzinger (2010b:16) provide twofold worldviews of being church, namely, on the one hand, a membership-centred 'boundary-making' view, which has as elements, *Civic orientation* (affirming existing social structures; stressing civil harmony and avoiding conflict; and individual members making own decisions on moral issues: these constituting mainly a 'this-worldly view') and *Sanctuary orientation* (concerned with refuge from this world; emphasis on tradition and doctrine; opposition to congregational involvement in social change; and patriotism and adherence to civil law: these constituting an 'other-worldly view'). In contrast to these two views there is a publicly proactive 'boundary-making' view, which has as elements, *Activist orientation* (stressing justice and having a critical posture to existing social structures; having openness to member and congregational involvement in social action; and having openness to confrontation and conflict: these constituting a 'this-worldly view') and *Evangelistic orientation* (concerned with personal witnessing; seeking conversion of everyone to the 'one true faith'; and demonstrating strong openness to the Holy Spirit: these constituting an 'other-worldly view').

It is in this publicly proactive boundary-making view that the missionary enterprise should be placed if it is to be useful to the African Renaissance movement. It is critical that mission and Missiology should meet the African Renaissance movement on this interface of solidarity with humanity and social justice issues.

#### **6.7.1.2 Activities and Projects**

The above-mentioned conceptual position dictates the direction and the activities mission and Missiology should take. Already, the church in general is well known for

its many social activities, both from a member-centred vantage, and other-worldly vantage. This was illustrated by The first Carnegie Commission of 1928, in Part V, Sociological Report, which recognised this role of the church as important especially in alleviating the plight of the 'poor whites' at that time (Albertyn 1932: V,47-71)<sup>133</sup>. The Commission also observed the church's failures, some of which it qualified in terms of the church's less developed state at that time. While the Commission's report was a resourceful research work and a context analytical tool, it however, had its short-comings. The report and its findings were based on commission's engaging whites only, and the results were used politically to advantage only a section of the South African population, in programs that promoted the apartheid system.

In about fifty years later a similar commission, The Second Carnegie Commission of 1984, was formed to investigate the effects of poverty. In its working group called, "Church, Poverty and Development in Southern Africa" it compiled insightful findings which were not only descriptive of the physical conditions of poverty among black South Africans, but also the conceptual and spiritual limitations that exacerbated the problem (NASH 1984: 14-20). This was especially apparent in the interview conducted in Botswana, entitled, "The 'multiplier factor' and economic development"<sup>134</sup> in which the interviewee, a 'churchman', describes how expert intervention with all the support systems is bound to fail if it lacks the theological and spiritual dimensions. It found as important reason for failure to be, namely, not recognising God in the developers programs. It argued that when God is neglected the moral conscience that should guide projects disappears and commitment by workers gradually wanes. To highlight the need for a spiritual dimension in "strategic planning" the article cites Sales' acknowledgement that, "many donor agencies themselves do not see the connection between development programs and mainstream church work, let alone theological education" (Sales in Nash, 1984:40). He argues further, "Service to human society and propagation of the faith are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they

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<sup>133</sup> It is typical in the context of that time (the 1920s to 1940s) that the only preoccupation of the Commission was with the dominant white population group.

<sup>134</sup> The interview was based on an adapted article by, S W Sales in the "Christian Century", 2 May 1979.

belong together because true development concerns the whole person in the whole community” (in Nash, 1984:40). Sales’ personal conversion came when he had initially questioned a developmental team in the villages of northern Ghana why it included a clergyman in the list of an “agriculturist, a literacy expert, a nutritionist and a nurse”.

It is quite clear that strategic planning that excludes the role of spirituality is distorted and will most likely show defects in theory and practice. It is imperative for the African Renaissance to learn from one of the most experienced, diverse and complex institutions or movements, namely, the church. In South Africa more than 80% of small businesses of the new order of Black Empowerment and Equity (BEE)<sup>135</sup> have failed. Initially government had barred churches from using these schemes as agents for community development. When community based organisations failed in the majority, the government soon realised its mistake and allowed churches to get involved in social upliftment programs. Churches, however, could only use neutral names that do not denote church affiliation. In the next paragraph I will look at a few examples of the church’s projects so as to emphasise the need for strategic planning that recognises spirituality as an essential part of social and economic development.

### **6.7.2 Church and mission in social projects**

In this section will briefly present community based projects that are initiatives founded on spiritual concepts and are driven by church and other faith based organisations. The first two examples I present here are driven by a concern for ecology and its preservation:

#### **6.7.2.1 Ecology (*fauna and flora*)**

##### *6.7.2.1.1 Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation (Zirrccon)*

One of the most successful stories of church managed development projects was initiated by Prof Inus Daneel (a former member of the then Department of Missiology

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<sup>135</sup> BEE is an initiative of the South African government to redress previously disadvantaged Black communities and to introduce them into the main economic stream.



at Unisa) under the so-called 'war of trees' in Zimbabwe (Charamba, *et al*, in Cuthbertson, *et al* 2003:43). The project which consists basically in replenishing the earth with indigenous trees, came to be known as Zirron (Zimbabwe Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation) and has won the approval of many local people (Zvanaka, 2003:55) and chiefs, as was apparent in interviews conducted (Charamba, *et al*, in Cuthbertson, *et al* 2003:43) and has led to several similar initiatives elsewhere, especially in South Africa. As the name of the project suggests, Zirron is a faith-based organisation and has had the cooperation of the masses of African Initiated Churches in many parts of Zimbabwe where Daneel has found himself a home as a faith practitioner and Missiological researcher.

#### 6.7.2.1.2 *Faith and Earthkeeping project*

This is a project of the Research Institute for Theology and Religion, at the University of South Africa. It was initiated through the funding from the Gold Fields Benefactor Scheme. It got listed in *The Green Pages*, an Environmental and Development Networking Directory of Bev Geach as one of the organisations and projects in environmental care (Olivier 2005:1). The 'principal objective' of the project is set out as, "to conscientise, empower and support communities and individuals at grassroots level to create and implement their own activities and policies for local, regional and national environmental protection, conservation and sustainable resource use" (Olivier 2005:1). Olivier (2005:1) distinguishes the Faith & Earth keeping project from the rest of environmental care projects, as exceptional, (with the exception of Zirron), because of "the use of basic belief-systems as vehicles to cause a change towards an environmentally more sensitive lifestyle." It is also a multi-faith endeavour because it accommodates African Traditional, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic and Jewish perspectives of environmental care. The Faith & Earthkeeping project has since concentrated on African Traditional communities and African Initiated Churches that they reckon to be having large numbers of followers and can effectively influence their local communities.

### 6.7.2.1.3 *Tshwane Leadership Foundation*

Tshwane leadership foundation, in Pretoria, was founded in 2003 as a collaborative of churches towards addressing challenges of city life. It houses several projects which focus on specific problems or innovative interventions. The individual projects were initiated independently at different times, some as early as the 1990s. There are not less than 14 projects in all, and these include: 1) The *Potter's House*, housing women and their children who vulnerable because of abuse or lack of income; 2) *Lerato House*, housing young girls (11-18years old) who are susceptible prostitution and human trafficking; 3) *Akanani*, addressing homelessness caused by numerous factors including stereotypes and unemployment; 4) *Nkululeko Community Centre*, which is a hub of activity at the centre of a community of mostly poor people on the fringes of the City; and 5) *Sediba Hope Aids Care Programme*, is a multi-organisational partnership which provides HIV/Aids related information, preventative, counselling, housing and health-care services ([www.tlf.org.za](http://www.tlf.org.za)). TLF's inspiration lies at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ who not only died for sins of humanity but reached out in love and care.

### 6.7.2.2 *The role of individuals in Church and mission*

There is tendency to think of projects and community organised initiatives as the most reputable of interventions. The biblical story of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-39) is a good example of individual initiatives that are worthy of emulation. In this story, Paul is called to the town of Joppa by a bereaving group of Christians to a home of a deceased Christian woman who had just died. Among the mourners is a circle of widows who tearfully bear testimony to the works of compassion in the form of clothing that she had made for them. This story underlines the work of individuals who make a difference among the people they live with. The traditional hymn 'brighten the corner where you are' is a strong motivation for individual persons to make an impact to the most serious problems affecting individuals and communities.

Proverbs 31 tells of a similar type of a woman who is industrious, who takes care for her family and enters into business deals as part of her economic activity. The role of women in these two examples is very important for purposes of woman empowerment. It is no wonder therefore why the first Carnegie Commission accorded “woman and daughter” a strategic position in its plan of fighting poverty among poor whites (Albertyn 1932: V, 169-197; V, 198-217). The role of individuals cannot be downplayed. I argue therefore that no matter how insignificant an individual’s contribution may seem to be considering the millions of people who are struggling for survival; it will certainly make a difference to an existing problem. We can learn from an African proverb that says, “an ant eats an elephant one piece at a time”. In reality, it is a host of ants, each taking its bite at the huge ‘problem’ that contributes rapidly to the problem being resolved. The value of individual Africans taking up the challenge and confronting the plight of communities cannot be underestimated.

South Africa is currently facing a problem of potholes in streets and roads which, in one report, are estimated to cost motorists on the whole a staggering R200 billion and more a year<sup>136</sup>. But in a small way, communities can do something. Three instances can serve as examples:

- 1) In Brits, someone planted a few trees in some potholes, and had the matter reported in the news media. This led to the local municipal authorities, including the mayor, visiting the street, closing it, and instructing that road repairs be done with immediate effect. It should be said though that this is an illegal intervention that could have led to the ‘culprit’ arrested and taken to a court of law. The significance of this incident though is that ‘someone’ did something that moved the ‘machinery’ of the local government into action;
- 2) According to Mike Kershaw (2010), it is becoming common practice for communities in South Africa to undertake road repairs especially during the rainy seasons. For instance several people in a Limpopo village, all of whom

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<sup>136</sup> [www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Potholes-hitting-SA-pockets/](http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Potholes-hitting-SA-pockets/) accessed 20/05/2010.

were unemployed, faced with the problem of unnavigable roads, decided to form a *letsema* (work-team in Sesotho) and make a difference. The motivation for undertaking the road repairs was that the bad state in which the roads were made the village inaccessible to essential services such as ambulances and food suppliers. With ordinary garden tools they moved into action to repair the main road that served as the main artery to the village. A local church provided drinking water and meals for the 'workers' during the course of the project; and lastly,

- 3) Similarly, at Ga-Rankuwa (the 'township' in which I reside; and this happens also in many other 'townships') several teenagers around the township, in groups of 2 or 3, fill up potholes in dirt and tarred roads during rainy days. In return they ask for donations from passerby cars. While this is a positive story of individuals making a difference; there is a downside. Road repairs without authorisation are illegal. It is even more dangerous when it is done by children since they are at risk of being knocked over by cars. A caring community should insist on the significance of children doing their homework and focusing on their studies. Another problem here is that they often never seem to succeed filling a little few potholes where they have stationed themselves for hours. This creates a bad culture of 'cheating on the job'.

When former-President Mbeki took office, he popularised several words some of which came to be associated with the African Renaissance. Among these were *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* then evolved into several similar words, including, *letsema* which is a Sesotho word meaning, joining hands to assist in a common project, and *khomanani* a Xitsonga word and *Farisani* a Tshivenda word, both meaning, holding hands or to cooperating or agreeing in doing something. In demonstrating these concepts government ministers and other officials donned blue overalls and helmets and engaged in several community projects such as painting schools and local health centres and clinics.

This spirit of volunteerism has long been and continues to be with the church. But the question is why does it not take root when it is encouraged by the government? The reasons are self-evident. When ordinary people joined the euphoria of 'letsema' or 'khomanani' many of them soon realised how they offered a hand out of freewill, but went home hungry at the end of the day, yet the government officials who encourage them on these initiatives pay themselves very high salaries, move in flashy cars, host extravagant birthday parties and are further reported in the media for all kinds of self-enriching schemes through corrupt means. This simply killed the spirit of *letsema* and *khomanani* and put a big question mark to the concept of *ubuntu*. It needs no further elaboration on how this should be a lesson to the attempts of an African Renaissance. The message is clear: people are an important force for change and so must not be taken for granted.

### **6.7.2.3 HIV/Aids Projects**

The problem of HIV/Aids as I have clearly stated in Chapter Two haunts everyone including the church. The church was a slow-starter in getting involved in the healing and ministries towards HIV/Aids infected and affected. It initially got involved in unfortunate debates that tried to establish whether HIV/Aids problem as conceived then was a product of 'sin' or not, and whether it was not a 'punishment' from God. When the effects of the disease proved indiscriminate even as affecting and infecting small children (cf. the "who has sinned?" debate, Joh.9:2<sup>137</sup>) it became obvious that the moment of action and not debates had come. Many churches started services including educational campaigns, hospices and home-based care.

The strength of the churches' projects was their spiritual foundation. This implied that faith communities do not only take care of the physical pain but also provide an emotional and spiritual comfort 'in life and in death'. Many surprises sprung from the faith-based centres, because instead of 'allowing' patients 'to die with dignity' many patients 'miraculously' came back to life. This was attributed to the healing power of

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<sup>137</sup> Joh 9:2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus Christ, working through the Holy Spirit as spiritual care-givers put emphasis on praying for the infected. Many returned to their homes and some even going back to work. But the church's challenge did not end with dealing with the effects of the disease, but the greatest challenge was at the level of prevention. Many churches, some in partnership with governments, soon started campaigns in promoting a change in lifestyle, especially in sexual behaviour.

Soon though, the partnership of the church and a secular government was bound to have challenges. For instance, the government's campaign included distribution of condoms as part of its "ABC" (**A**bstain-**B**e faithful-**C**ondomise) notion. Churches were divided on the aspect of the "C". Many churches, including the Roman Catholic, believe that the use of condoms gives, on the one hand, a false of security and, encourages, on the other hand, a promiscuous life especially among the young people. Despite the differences the partnership prevailed. It also included the area of care for the patient. Churches stressed in the name of the love of Jesus caring that is modelled on the example of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:33-35). They promoted a sense of 'humanity' that was saying, 'we are all equally created in the image of God'. Furthermore, they waged a fight against stigmatisation that has proved to be an emotional torture to the infected and the affected (cf. Saayman & Kriel 1991).

In considering the above mentioned cases of the HIV/Aids and other healing ministries, the African Renaissance movement should find spirituality as an indispensable fellow-traveller towards the dawn of a new Africa. The church through God's miraculous workings continues to inspire a 'renaissance' in individuals and communities that by the look of things had been prematurely pronounced as 'dead'. The renaissance movement should be aware that humans and their institutions need the Holy Spirit in planning and caring out their projects. However the movement should also recognise that there are 'faith boundaries' that are determined by theological interpretation that always need to be negotiated. Otherwise, the phrase, "let us agree to differ" should hold even when there is cooperation in areas of disagreement.

### 6.7.3 Corruption and morality

Governments and the corporate world globally suffer the blemish of corruption and immorality. This is a wide and ingrained problem that cannot be adequately exhausted here. What is the church's response to this problem? As a point of departure, the church's primary calling is to a 'holy', 'righteous' and 'blameless life' (cf. 1 Pet.1:14-16, also Gen.17:1<sup>138</sup>). Its task is also to call all humanity towards this condition and attitude. The church is one of the institutions that still apply what the postmodern worldview consider as a 'conservative' and 'outdated' moral code of conduct. But the argument here is not about a 'sinless' and 'blameless' state of the church, but about recognising and accepting sin and its effects as a problem. It is about taking corrective steps by confessing sin, repenting and taking the conversion journey (1 Joh. 1:5-10). The Roman Catholic Church has recently accounted itself well by taking appropriate steps against the problem of priests who are 'paedophiles' in the church<sup>139</sup>.

However, can secular states vindicate themselves accordingly? This is a problem that lies at the heart of the ethical construct of constitutions of governments and corporate bodies. To illustrate the complexity of this problem I will use the current government of South Africa as an example. President Jacob Zuma undertook to fight corruption and unethical behaviour. When new ministers took office they bought themselves very expensive cars. When such expenditure was questioned, many ministers argued that they did not break any law. The question, nevertheless, was whether buying a very expensive car can morally be justifiable in the light of serious budget constraints and deteriorating services that are marked by violent protests throughout the country. Moral conscience and moral regeneration, which is another project of the African

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<sup>138</sup> 1 Peter 1:14-16: As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

<sup>139</sup> Editorial 2010. Pope acts against paedophile priests, *BangkokPost*, published 22 April, at [www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews](http://www.bangkokpost.com/breakingnews) accessed 22/06/2010.

Renaissance, require that even if the constitution is silent on a matter, sensitivity to what is morally right should dictate right decisions and actions. Therefore African Renaissance should signal a turnaround from the scourge of mortality of conscience which leads to self-enrichment, inconsiderate use and embezzlement of funds on luxuries.

In concluding the discussion on the sixth petal of the missionary matrix it is quite evident that *strategic planning* should remain an integral part of the renaissance movement. In theory and practice there is necessity of synergy that should take each abstract and concrete element of planning seriously. With this in mind I will discuss the last petal on the praxis cycle, *reflexivity*.

## 6.8 Reflexivity

### 6.8.1 Responsive interactivity in the praxis cycle.

In the past paragraphs I have discussed six of the seven dimensions of the Missionary praxis cycle. I have tried to make meaning of the African Renaissance by discussing the most notable theses of Missiology. I am so far convinced that it was necessary to engage all of those matrix points critically. I have done so especially as a way of highlighting the short-comings that are inherent in the African Renaissance theses and its subsidiary movement. In this paragraph on *reflexivity* I now proceed to discuss the last petal of this flower matrix in terms of the responsive interactivity between the different aspects of the praxis cycle.

*Reflexivity* calls for an interplay between the various 'petals' of the flower matrix. Its purpose is to sharpen the value and the integrity of all the elements of the praxis cycle. As a social theory, *reflexivity* is an interactive relationship of forces that act on each other<sup>140</sup>. In Missiological terms the subject of theory and practice comes to mind. In creating a better understanding of this conception, from a Missiological

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<sup>140</sup> An example is 'bidirectional relationship' between *cause* and *effect*, such that people tend to act causing reaction or they themselves react to external stimuli (cf. Wikipedia/reflexivity accessed 20/05/2010).



perspective, I will borrow a critique of Kritzinger (2010a) on the traditional Protestant method of the exposition of the *Scripture*. This method, which he calls, ‘an *explicatio-applicatio*’ scheme “is generally expressed by starting with the exposition of Scripture and distilling universal principles of doctrine and ethics *out of it*, before applying those of a particular context” (Kritzinger 2010a). Kritzinger’s critique observes the incorrect assumption that ‘good theory’ leads to ‘good practice’. However, this imposes text on the given context and is not helpful for contextual theology. Therefore, “we need a more complex and inclusive theological method that brings into focus *all the factors* [emphasis mine] that shape *religious identity* and interreligious encounter” (Kritzinger 2010a). In the case I am making, this is what shapes Missionary praxis and takes into account all the elements of the matrix cycle.

The African Renaissance approach of neglecting the spiritual dimension in the life of the people on the continent is in effect dismembering parts of the whole. It effectively denies the necessary reflexivity that should prevail between the various parts of the sense-making whole of the African society.

## 6.8.2 Reflecting on past experiences

### 6.8.2.1 Maintaining ‘the subversive memory of Jesus’

The process of contextualisation has always been present in the church since the early church. The task of maintaining the good news as handed down by Jesus and the prophets and the need to apply it to their context made this process alive. This called for the need for translating these prophetic messages and handing them down to next generations. Therefore “*translation* and *tradition* went hand in hand. The two concepts created a pattern of faithfulness to the notion of contextualisation which Arias thinks should be the norm for the church in any time or any place (Arias 1984:66). Arias laments the fact that the church has unfortunately often upheld a reduced message of Jesus Christ by adhering only to some aspects of his kingdom message. He insists that the Scripture with ‘the subversive memory of Jesus’ has this thrust of subverting the world and the church itself (:66) and by so doing pointing to

the totality of the Kingdom which permeates all aspects of life. Missiological reflexivity is a condition of being continually nudged to this realisation of the 'whole' and of being moved as agents of transformation in the hand of God. To achieve this, he recognizes the role of the Holy Spirit as the 'subverter' who was promised by Jesus "to help us to remember" (:67) our mission in the world and time we live in.

Arias' concept is helpful particularly when considering the church's challenge to economic, social and political systems under the agency of the African Renaissance. Its role is therefore subversive in that all stakeholders on the continent are drawn towards cooperation. When that is achieved the possibility of a new birth and a new dispensation becomes real.

#### **6.8.2.2 Continuity and discontinuity in mission praxis**

I have, in previous chapters, noticed the lack of homogeneity in the church as an institution and the disagreement that exists in the 'body of Christ'. One of the fundamental causes of this discord is the manner in which 'agents' of mission, because of conflicting interests, analyse the context, read and interpret the Scripture differently. This negative manifestation of a Missiological witness is an indictment against the Gospel of hope and change. It is on the basis of this that critics of the spiritual institutions, especially the church, often begrudge them as credible agents of transformation. I regard this unfortunate image of the faith community as a definite factor for 'discontinuity'.

But the church and the missionary agency have over the years succeeded to overcome such internal weakness because of the workings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit continues without unceasing to bring about enlightenment, repentance, forgiveness, conversion and restitution<sup>141</sup>. This is possible because of the church's virtue of introspection, which it is able to do with or without external censure. With this virtue, the Holy Spirit has played an important pivotal part in the life of the Church as

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<sup>141</sup> The story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2ff) is good example of such disposition.

far as *regeneration* is concerned. Through conversion and regeneration the church and its mission has succeeded to form continuity with the *missio Dei* as contained in the Gospel of Christ. It is this character of the church that socio-political programs of the African Renaissance should seriously consider for a better continent.

### **6.8.2.3 Succession plan and mentoring**

Human institutions are always at pain to establish a long history of meaningful existence. This need to extend an institution according to its own kind, to successive generations, seems to be natural. I want assume that this is a trait humans have inherited in the beginning as part of God's creation. But due to humanity's sinful nature this succession does no longer follow naturally. For instance, many kings do not let go of their position of power without a struggle. They feel threatened and try by all means, even ruthlessly, to resist any move that points to their replacement. The case of King Herod who killed all the two year boys in the village of Bethlehem in an attempt to eliminate baby Jesus illustrates the point quite well (Luke 2:16). In what appeared to be schizophrenic behaviour, King Herod also murdered several members of his family for he feared they would depose him from his throne.

Over against this self-destructing attitude of resisting succession, is John the Baptist's attitude in respect of Jesus Christ. His words, "He must become greater; I must become less" (Joh.3:30), referring to Jesus, clearly tells us that he was ready to bow out respectfully for Jesus to take over the spiritual renewal he had apparently started. As for Jesus, his succession plan, like most Jewish teachers, is contained in raising disciples who would learn from him to continue with his '*calling*'. Jesus then passed on this praxis model to the church in the 'Great Commission' (Mt.28:19-20). He instructed the apostles to *make disciples*. This is a call that ensures that the church and the mission of Christ shall continue to have necessary agents for the mission. The place of ministerial formation rests in the making of disciples. As a praxis based ministry it requires that training institutions maintain reflexivity between 'teaching' and 'doing', thereby ensuring that mentoring takes all the elements of the praxis cycle into full perspective.

I have pointed to the problem of succession in some of Africa's nations. The continent's 'Big' and 'Strong' men have demonstrated the lack of succession planning and therefore, an absence of mentoring programs. The several structures created to serve under the African Renaissance should embody principles that encourage leaders of states to embrace the essentials of 'letting go' of power through democratic means. By wilfully introducing mentorship programs that are non-threatening to them and their next-of-kin prospects of peace and stability from one regime to the other can be improved. In this way the reflexivity lends an important dimension to the cycle of praxis and provides cohesion between the various elements.

#### **6.8.2.4 Planning for longevity**

In the previous paragraph I have referred to the need for 'longevity' as a general human disposition to life, especially where control over positions of power and influence are concerned. I now extend this argument further by looking at it from a Missiological point of view and thereafter applying it to the notion of the African Renaissance. I specifically want to apply the concept of longevity by referring to an important Missiological concept of the 'indigenous church' theory, the 'Three-Self formula' (Self-Supporting, Self-Governing and Self-Propagating) that was proposed by Henry Venn<sup>142</sup> and Rufus Anderson (Bosch 1991; cf. Keenan 2009<sup>143</sup>) The concept had specific reference to 'younger' or mission churches.

Although Venn and Anderson meant well in suggesting this concept, it however threatened the claim the sending churches had upon the younger churches as fruits of their missionary labours. It threatened to erode the prestigious stamp of 'ownership' over them. It also required the sending churches or missionary societies to introduce a programme of 'releasing' the younger churches after a period of mentorship. This would require the younger churches to begin to fend for themselves and to use home-grown methods for self-sustainability. The possibility of these younger churches failing the act of weaning was always there. This then was used by the sending agents to discourage any attempt of applying the Three-Self concept. As

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<sup>142</sup> [www.dacb.org/stories/non-africans/legacy\\_venn.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/non-africans/legacy_venn.html) accessed 22/06/2010.

<sup>143</sup> David Bosch introduced 'the fourth self': Self-Theologising (Keenan 2009)

a cushion to the period of transferring control over mission churches to the state of autonomy, the concept of a *moratorium* was suggested by some. What clearly emerged on the part of younger churches was sense of dependency that was noticed among the younger churches. This was cause for concern for advocates of the 'Three-Self' formula and the 'moratorium debate'. It is obvious that they did not envisage a 'quick-fix' solution to a long history of deliberate tutelage among the younger churches. However, the thought of loss of 'regular' income and other privileges led to many leaders of the younger churches rejecting advances of the Three-Self and moratorium concepts. But other African leaders of the younger churches realised the inhibiting effects of the missionary enterprise. They then broke away and ventured into independence on their own. They became founders of African Initiated Churches which over the last century has experienced phenomenal growth.

I have sketched the scenario in the previous paragraph to demonstrate the socio-political structures the African leaders should appreciate for their own benefit. The dynamics at play in the missionary field and those in the political field, in light of colonialism, are comparable. Many nations under colonial patronage suffered similar inhibiting conditions as with the missionary enterprise. Today all African nations are independent at least statutorily. But many still suffer 'dwarfism' as they cannot grow enough to sustain themselves, partly because of complex tendencies arising from dependence and inept political leaders. I want to suggest that there lacks a sound plan that is reflexive of all contributing factors to make African nations successful. According to Kritzinger (2010b) they lack integrity (wholeness) that consciously integrates the seven dimensions in the (Missiological) praxis or, which in my view of the national issues I call, an 'integrational national strategy'.

#### **6.8.2.5 Towards reflexive long-term strategies**

The church and missions need long term planning for organisational strategy; something similar to the Chinese proverb that says, "To plan for one year, plant rice; to plan for years, plant trees; but to plan for centuries, educate the young". This proverb is similar to the Northern Africa's word of wisdom about growing date trees. Those who plant dates know that you have to wait on the average fifteen years before

harvesting the first fruits. These images should assist those who make an appraisal of Africa's history and subsequently its planning for future to be able to assess its strategies in terms of short-, medium- and long-term planning. While quick-fix interventions are necessary for the most pressing and immediate needs, painstaking endeavours should simultaneously take place towards long lasting solutions. A continual reflexive approach should hold these various elements of the movement together in the manner that is cohesive and coordinated.

### **6.9 A preliminary conclusion based on Chapter 6**

In concluding this discussion of the seventh dimension of the matrix I need to remind ourselves that mission praxis is a holistic and integrated exercise where theory and practice are in constant 'dialogue'. It is also an accountable and responsible organic movement where participation places one in the loop of the workings of the Holy Spirit. This is a faith dimension that has seen the line of the chorus, "if you believe and I believe, and we together pray; The Holy Spirit 'will' come down and Africa will be saved..." become an inspiration during the anti-Apartheid struggle. This is a 'cause' and 'effect' factor for the 'fuel' that is necessary to fire up Africa towards the emerging 'Africa century'. I now proceed to make overall concluding statements in the last chapter of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 7

### 7 CONCLUSION

As I bring the whole debate on African Renaissance and Missiology to a closure I need to sound first some important warnings that Africa can only ignore at its own peril. The following important remarks should suffice:

#### **7.1 A concluding message for African Renaissance protagonists**

The host of African Renaissance activists, most of whom belong the 'intelligentsia', political leaders and scholars need to take the following remarks into consideration:

1) *Non-privatisation of the African Renaissance movement*: African Renaissance must be *de-privatised* so that messages about pertinent issues affecting Africa should be conveyed in a language that can spread and take root in the hearts, minds and actions of the common people. People should not remain the level of trivial matters such as using African Renaissance as a naming activity. In this regard I can point to how in the prototype Renaissance the projects were at both levels of private and public. For instance works of arts and science were done by individuals but benefitted the larger population. A good example was the invention of the printing press which revolutionised the life of the society. The challenge to the African Renaissance is relocating many aspects of the movement from the centres of the privileged and present them in forms that are accessible to the majority of the people. I stated that in its present form the African Renaissance is perceived as an intellectual property of the few. The current feeling is that African Renaissance discourse is patented and cannot be duplicated or diversified. Exponents of the African Renaissance should move away from leaning towards the direction that seems to be establishing itself as an "ivory tower" movement, and an exclusive prerogative of the few elite.

2) *Reading the signs of the times*: Now is the 'appointed time' for Africa, it is its *kairos*. The significance of time and the ability to "read the signs of the time" played

an important part in the ministry of Jesus. On several occasions Jesus pointed to the failure of the temple authorities to read the signs of time<sup>144</sup>. The coming of 'times' and its detection formed a prophetic discourse which can be termed a 'special revelation' (Mt. 11:25<sup>145</sup>). The revelation was special because even Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist<sup>146</sup> who was a prophet, and even Jesus' disciples, could not figure it out (Acts 1:6)<sup>147</sup>. But Jesus, in stinging prophetic sayings spelled out the 'present' and the 'future' (Mt. 24). Generations after Jesus have been at pain trying to read the signs of 'their' times. Two forms of 'prophecy' have subsequently emerged in the pursuance of interpreting correctly the 'signs of time', namely, the *spirit of error* and the *spirit of discernment*.

The '*spirit of error*' often manifests itself at the height of expectancy for solutions or divine intervention. It emerges with most disastrous consequences to the affected communities, for example, the story of Nongqawuse and the cattle killing<sup>148</sup>. The other, the '*spirit of discernment*', which is both predictive and interpretative of events also impacts specific communities at particular times. When this spirit is operative, affected persons are moved into recognising trends and possible outcomes that may affect specific individuals, leaders, communities or nations. These 'prophets' are then imbued with the necessary charisma to intervene and act in particular ways that suggest and, if heeded, bring solutions and relief to the besieged people.

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<sup>144</sup> Mt 16:3 ... 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

<sup>145</sup> Mt 11:25, At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children".

<sup>146</sup> Mt 11:2-3, When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciple to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

<sup>147</sup> Acts 1:6, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>148</sup> Nongqawuse, a Xhosa girl, in a mysterious way predicted that the sun would turn red and stand still at midday and Whites would be driven into the sea, and better crops and cattle would follow, if the Xhosas were to kill all their all their cattle and destroy their crops. They did and the result was disastrous ([www.encounter.co.za/article /118.html](http://www.encounter.co.za/article /118.html) accessed 28/06/2010).



The Kairos Document (1995) is, in my opinion, an example of such a spirit at work. In one sense, this document calls social analysis, 'reading the signs of time' or 'interpreting this *kairos*' (Chapter 4, paragraph 1), as I have already discussed in a paragraph above. Another similar view is in the fact that, Missiology and Christian missions are embedded in a 'spirit of discernment' (1 Cor. 2:14). It charges God's prophets to 'sense' the times and warn the people and their leaders of impending dangers. Therefore, God always 'searches' for<sup>149</sup> and raises these prophets. The church needs to be prayerful and to be 'in touch' with the Spirit of God who is able to impart such gifts to humans.

It is my conviction that the proponents of the African Renaissance will need such prophetic figures in their midst and in many African communities to enable favourable conditions for the Renaissance to flourish. While 'sensing' the right time is very important, more than that is necessary. No, not the destruction of any of our resources like in the case of the Nongqawuse tragedy, but to turn these resources into useful means.

3) *Turning 'the bad' into useful 'good'*: Africans need interventions that are similar to Elisha's turning bitter water into sweet water (2 Kings 2:19-22)<sup>150</sup>. Africa's bad experiences and its unproductive methods and attitudes should stop to be used as a stick against the continent. They must, however, be used as learning curves towards lifelong learning experiences and tools to develop the country. Let the untainted resources, (both material and human — our young people, our women, etc.) be tools in the mastermind's creative hand. Certain industries that have earned themselves a

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<sup>149</sup> Ezek 22:30, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

<sup>150</sup> 2 Kings 2:19-22, The men of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive." 20 "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. 21 Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the LORD says: `I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" 22 And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.

bad name like the film industry, 'sex workers' and other technologies (internet, cellphones, etc) can be converted or modified into good and morally acceptable 'tools' we can pride ourselves with. In conclusion, I certainly need to stress on the minds of African Renaissance activists to begin to move from theory towards building structures that will impact peoples' lives and nature in a positive and tangible way. The message to the African Renaissance movements forms one side of the coin. I need to include faith communities, especially Christians, in my concluding remarks to present the other side of the coin.

## **7.2 A concluding message for Church and Mission practitioners**

The church and mission agents need to critically reconsider their praxis to improve their standing as role players in the open market of ideas and action. The following observations have relevance:

1) *Stereotyping*: Stereotypical obsessions are a serious hindrance to cooperation, peace and co-existence. It is a serious problem if the Church is complicit in such wrongdoing. This will certainly harm the course of the African Renaissance dream in that the people of Africa should reach out across all types of barriers, including race, ethnicity, gender, age and creed. Therefore, if barriers are caused by theological interpretation, there is an urgent need for institutions of theological training to reconsider their epistemological approach in the interest of finding the 'common' and 'higher' good for the African communities. The Moral Regeneration Movement should find its greatest support in spiritual communities. Spiritual communities are generally viewed as custodians of morality. They can therefore do well in participating and championing programs that discourage stereotypes but promote unity and cooperation.

2) *Re-reading the Bible in liberating modes*: Christians should not be trapped in modes of Bible-reading that make them uncritical of the text they receive. When reading any 'story' or 'proposal' they should always remember to ask, "What is the 'bigger picture' that is advanced by the various voices that try to promulgate an 'African dream'? They should be able to discern with ease any readings and

messages that are aimed at self-enrichment of the few outspoken leaders. They should also be suspicious when such messages are delivered to people who do not have insight to the nature of texts that come to them in 'the name of the Lord'. It has become clear how these leaders have become very rich at the expense of millions of people many of whom languish in destitute conditions. Theological interpretation should therefore serve to empower many to question and discard ideas, programmes and structures that do not serve the overall goals of the African Renaissance. It should also empower them to replace them with alternatives that speak positively and creatively to the ideals of the African Renaissance.

### **7.3 The way forward: Producing new knowledge**

The value of producing texts, arts and concepts that add value to our heritage as African people cannot be adequately emphasised. Africans in all disciplines of tuition and research should strive towards building a legacy that will create classics for posterior generations. This should help create a wealth of vocabulary that is relevant to the needs and challenges of the people. Again, that would also serve as antidote to the 'poisonous' messages of the prophets of doom who will never see anything good coming out of Africa. Future generations need to have positive and affirming messages to fall back to for their own use and of their progenies. The church should play its role, so must the African Renaissance movement.

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