A comparison between Christian and African traditional paradigms of reconciliation and how they could dialogue for the benefit of South African society.

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Abstract
This dissertation seeks to compare paradigms of reconciliation in African tradition (including African indigenous religion and culture) and Christianity, in order to enhance the reconciliation process in South Africa. The aim is to enable and promote dialogue between African tradition and Christian tradition, with special reference to the reconciliation paradigms they offer. In order to accomplish this, the first step taken is to establish what African tradition has to offer in terms of reconciliation resources. African traditional religion, philosophy and anthropology are identified as providing a conceptual basis for reconciliation. Certain African traditional legal resources as well as African indigenous ritual resources are also considered able to contribute to social reconciliation. The next step in the dissertation is to establish what the Christian faith tradition has to offer in terms of reconciliation paradigms. The following resources available to, and stemming from, Christianity are discussed: reconciliation in the Bible; the narrative of the cross and the resurrection; the inter-linked concepts of sin, repentance and forgiveness; the church as reconciling community and institution. After having elaborated on certain reconciliation paradigms lodged in both African tradition and Christianity, the next step is to explore ways in which these paradigms interact. In some respects, they are found to clash and disagree because of their differences and the discontinuities between them. Yet in significant ways they indeed connect to and complement each other. This dissertation seeks to highlight points of agreement and connection between the paradigms of reconciliation provided by African tradition and Christian tradition. Moreover, it seeks to illustrate that the two cultural and religious traditions could interact fruitfully for the benefit of South African society. A concrete example of such positive interaction and mutual enrichment is brought forward, viz. a “new” ritual of reconciliation that combines resources from both traditions.

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