

# RECONCILIATION, FORGIVENESS AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

BIBLICAL, PASTORAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITORS

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# TRANSFERRING FROZEN CONFLICT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

In Search of a Contextual Pastoral Approach<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

In general, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a salient process with a firm mandate to set a process in place to face and deal with the apartheid past of South Africa. However, the lack of implementing the TRCs recommendations<sup>3</sup> as well as the reluctance of government, civil society and the religious<sup>4</sup> groupings to lobby, network and facilitate this commitment is evident. As time elapsed since the onset of transition in South Africa to the current situation new insight has come to the fore regarding how the transition was managed and the impact of the TRC on current and future generations. Subsequently, there has been an escalation of resistance to transformation and justice on many levels of our society. What is also evident is that the intensity of the resistance, more often violent than not, has increased. In addition, the language has shifted from a focus on reconciliation to having a strong emphasis on justice, reparation and restitution. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the majority of people are disillusioned, as the promises made to them during the transitional process as well as subsequent election campaigns by the government has not materialised. Political freedom is largely in place but economic justice is still an ever-increasing challenge. The resultant disillusionment and desperation is causing more and more people from different sectors of society to turn to violence in their search for justice, as they literally have nothing to lose.

According to the power transition theory, as indicated by Kegley and Wittkopf (1997), hegemonic periods, in general, last approximately sixty to ninety years, and conflicts, which result in a period stabilisation of power distribution last

- 1 The research and writing of this contribution was made possible by the fellowship I received from the Protestant Theological University (PThU) in Amsterdam, Netherlands, from 7 April to 7 June 2017.
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- 3 See the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (1998). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. Volume 6. Cape Town: Juta and Co Ltd, p.589.
- 4 Cf. C.H. Thesnaar. (2015). 'Report on the re-enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's faith hearing consultation'. Unpublished report. Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 8–9 October 2014.

approximately 20 years.<sup>5</sup> War-weariness and the tendency (although this was broken in the first half of the twentieth century) for nations not to engage themselves in another conflict after being involved in a traumatic transition are reasons for this lack of engagement.<sup>6</sup> This argument by Kegley and Wittkopf highlights an aspect of temporarily that has to do with the period of time that has elapsed since the conflict ended, and in particular, what has developed, changed and transformed within the timeframe of 20 to 25 years after the transition. Although this contribution will only focus on South Africa, there are numerous examples of reports from other countries in relation to the significant timeframe of 20 to 25 years after the culmination of their conflict, the beginning of the transition process to a new democracy, and the period following the transition. However, for brevity's sake, I will only mention the following examples of reports: The 20 year anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina published in 2015.<sup>7</sup> The study by Treisman (2009) on the dramatic changes in the mid-1980s in Central Eastern Europe, and Russia called "20 years of political transition."<sup>8</sup> The IMF published a report regarding the transitions in Eastern Europe 25 years later.<sup>9</sup> The Red House also started a series of debates that reflected on the previous 25 years of Bulgarian development post-1989 under the theme: "25 years after 1989: What has happened to the idea of social equality?"<sup>10</sup> There were also some reports that looked at the first 20 years of democracy in South Africa.<sup>11</sup> The Conversation Africa's politics and society editor, Thabo Leshilo asked academics to review how well Namibia and Zimbabwe, the other two most recently independent countries on the continent, had performed 22 years into their independence journey.<sup>12</sup>

Based on the above-mentioned transition theory and examples, it is clear that 20 to 25 years following a transition, countries go through a critical time, as serious questions are often raised regarding transformation and change. It is particularly

- 5 Cf. Kegley, C.W and Wittkopf, E.R. (1943/1997). *World politics: Trend and transformation* (6th ed). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- 6 See the definition of "war-weariness". (n.d.) In *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* [Online]. Viewed from <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/War-weariness>. [Accessed: 16 February 2017]
- 7 Cf. Srebrenica Massacre, After 20 Years, Still Casts a Long Shadow in Bosnia <https://nyti.ms/2HRKwud> [Accessed: 18 February 2017]  
Also see: Srebrenica Massacre. (2015). After 20 Years, Still Casts a Long Shadow in Bosnia [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/2TAjfSy> [Accessed 15 February 2017].
- 8 Treisman, D. (2009). 20 years of transition in rap Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/38S3Qne> [Accessed 15 February 2017]
- 9 Cf. Roaf, J., Atoyan, R., Joshi, B., Krogulski, K. and an IMF Staff Team. (2014). 25 Years of Transition Post-Communist Europe and the IMF Regional Economic Issues [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/2SSrb2i> [Accessed 16 February 2017].
- 10 Cf. Red House debate. (2014). 25 years after 1989. What has happened to the idea of social equality? [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/2vWoq7g> [Accessed 16 February 2017].
- 11 Cf. Newman, K.S. and De Lannoy, A. (2014), *After Freedom: The Rise of the Post-Apartheid Generation in Democratic South Africa*. Boston: Beacon Press; The twenty-year review 1994 – 2014. Document of the office of the Presidency [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/39k94IA> [Accessed: 13 January 2018].
- 12 Cf. T. Leshilo. (2016). What Africa's most newly independent states did with 22 years of freedom. In *The Conversation*. (Online). Viewed from <http://bit.ly/2SQOQAm> [Accessed: 13 January 2018]



the next generation who raises these questions as they engage with existential issues on a daily basis. In this regard, the time that has elapsed since the transition to the current reality within South Africa epitomises the fact that theologians will need to think carefully about the way they currently speak and write about the concepts of “reconciliation” and “healing,” as the whole playing field has changed. There is a need for theologians to become less arrogant in this regard. For this reason, this chapter seeks to explore whether the theory of contextual pastoral care based on the “dialogical perspective” of Boszormenyi-Nagy,<sup>13</sup> and further developed theologically by the Dutch scholars Hanneke Meulink-Korf and Aat van Rhijn, if integrated within the African cultural context, will help break through the frozen conflict. It will begin with a brief discussion of the term “frozen conflict” and argue for a broader understanding of the term. Following this, this chapter will reflect further on relevant concepts from the theory of contextual pastoral care. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a few final remarks.

## WHAT DEFINES FROZEN CONFLICT?

Clancy and Nagle (2009:14), referring to the work of Nodia (2004), define “frozen conflicts” as “those in which violent ethno-political conflict over secession has led to the establishment of a *de facto* regime that is recognised by neither the international community nor the rump state from which the secession occurred.”<sup>14</sup> This term is commonly used for post-Soviet conflicts and other perennial territorial disputes, as well as conflicts in the Balkans, Cyprus, and on the Korean peninsula, to name a few. As Peet (2008:1) explains, these conflicts are “frozen” because “a string of nasty small wars have been settled not through peace deals but simply by freezing each side's positions.”<sup>15</sup>

As the violence surrounding the secession has largely abated, the conflict remains “frozen”. Although the armed conflict has been terminated, there are, in most cases, no official peace treaties in place, nor any other political framework with the goal to resolve the conflict between the opposing parties. Nor is there any process in

- 13 Cf. Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. and Framo, J. (eds.) (1985). *Intensive family therapy: Theoretical and practical aspects*. New York: Brunner/Mazel; Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. and Spark, G. (1984). *Invisible loyalties: Reciprocity in intergenerational family therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel; Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. and Krasner, B. (1986). *Between give and take: A clinical guide to contextual therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel; Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (1987). *Foundations of contextual therapy: Collected papers of Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, MD*. New York: Brunner/Mazel; Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., Grunebaum, J. and Ulrich, D. (1991). 'Contextual Therapy', in Gurman, A. and Kniskern, D. (eds.) *Handbook of Family Therapy, Vol 2*. New York: Brunner/Mazel; Krasner, B.R. and Joyce, A.J. (1995). *Truth, Trust, and Relationships: Healing Interventions in Contextual Therapy*. New York: Brunner & Mazel.
- 14 Cf. Clancy, M.A.C. and Nagle, J. (2009). 'Frozen Conflicts, Minority Self-Governance, Asymmetrical Autonomies – In search of a framework for conflict management and conflict resolution'. Paper presented at the Sixth Asia-Europe Roundtable, University of Ulster, Republic of Ireland, 10-12 June [Online]. Viewed from [www.incore.ulster.ac.uk](http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk) [Accessed 17 January 2017].
- 15 Cf. Peet, J. (2008). 'Frozen conflicts: Europe's unfinished business'. *The Economist*. [Online]. Viewed from <http://www.economist.com/node/12494503> [Accessed 13 September 2015].

place to seek reconciliation. Therefore, the threat of conflict is always imminent and can erupt unpredictably at any moment. Traumatic contexts such as these create an insecure and unstable environment for citizens.

In an attempt to broaden the understanding of the term “frozen conflict,” it is necessary to reflect briefly on the Northern Irish situation. The armed conflict in Northern Ireland largely ended in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement.<sup>16</sup> To this day, this agreement has largely succeeded in keeping the two opposing sides separate in their own neighbourhoods, although they engage well in public spaces. Almost 20 years later, Northern Ireland continues to remain in a situation that could be described as a “frozen conflict.” Despite several lengthy public consultations on how to deal with the past, no systematic, state-supported process has been implemented. In this regard, Clancy and Nagle (2009:14) argue that there is always an interplay between endogenous and exogenous factors that obviates conflict transformation and/or conflict resolution, and this is what separates “frozen conflicts” from other minority disputes. In their explanation they refer to the conflict in Northern Ireland and indicate that this conflict “could be considered to be ‘frozen’ as its integrity has not been altered; Nationalists and Unionists retain their discordant political preferences. However, the way in which this conflict manifests itself endogenously (through power-sharing, as opposed to violence), and the relationships between the key external actors to the conflict (i.e. the UK and Irish governments) have been transformed” (Clancy & Nagle, 2009:14).

To further broaden and deepen the understanding of frozen conflict, van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2007:26) indicate that when people continue to be overwhelmed by a traumatic experience, there is a silence of the senses, which they describe as a state of being frozen.<sup>17</sup> To them, silence after an ongoing traumatic experience is more than the lack of words; it actually shows that victims of trauma have a lack of understanding of what has happened to them. They argue that trauma overwhelms the psyche, as it contains no reference point in terms of one's former experiences (van der Merwe & Gobodo-Madikizela, 2007:26). Silence and a lack of understanding of what has happened to an individual, family, community, or even a nation, normally manifests in denial, as there are limited safe spaces where people can voice their trauma.

Where peace and reconciliation processes have not managed to constructively address the past, the opposing sides in the conflict will continue to be haunted by it and their destructive understanding will then be transmitted to subsequent generations.<sup>18</sup> Unhealed traumas from the past have the potential to capture the future and, in the extreme, destroy the next generation(s) by reinforcing the identity of particular ethnic, racial, or religious groups. The implication of unhealed trauma is that it creates narratives that lead to destructive memory. Destructive memory is

16 Democratic Progress Institute. (2013). The Good Friday Agreement: An Overview [Online]. Viewed from <http://bit.ly/2v9WRHz> [Accessed 19 February 2017].

17 van der Merwe, C.N. and Gobodo-Madikizela, P. (2007). *Narrating our Healing. Perspectives on Working through Trauma*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

18 Cf. van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela, (2007). *Narrating our healing*, p.33

in turn kept alive as it is transmitted to the next generation by the different actors of the conflict generation. In this way, the conflict becomes “frozen” with the potential to feed into trans-generational trauma that can erupt at any moment. The opposing sides in the colonial and apartheid conflict within South Africa is an example of trans-generational trauma that was passed on from the one generation to the next, following particular frozen conflicts in the past.

Based on this argument, the understanding of frozen conflict should not only be limited to the traditional definition of frozen conflict that is based on ending the conflict at all cost without any process of peace or reconciliation in place. The current violence, frustration, anger, and intolerance that we find in our society reemphasises that frozen conflict should always be understood in a temporal way, as it could erupt at any moment if the endogenous factors have not managed to transform (on all levels—politically, socially, economically and spiritually) and reconcile the nation. What is significant from this scenario is that conflict can be “frozen” for a length of time even after a successful transition that was followed by specific provisions, such as the TRC process, to mention but one example. In relation to the argument by Clancy and Nagle (2009:14) who emphasise exogenous factors, as well as the argument by Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2007), I am of the opinion that South Africa still finds itself in a “frozen conflict” situation. This is over and above the fact that it went through endogenous transformation (political change and new constitution) and a healing process (facilitated by the TRC) more than 20 years ago. Given the discussion above, it is probably better to use the term “intergenerational frozen conflict.”

## CONTEXTUAL PASTORAL CARE APPROACH

Pragmatically, and based on the argument thus far, it is clear that there is not one specific prescribed method or strategy that will break through intergenerational frozen conflict in today's societies. For a contextual pastoral care approach to make a contribution towards this goal it will need to be trans-disciplinary, hermeneutical and intercultural with a key focus on the African cultural context. As Mkhize (2016:1) indicates, one cannot pretend that the notion of “African” is in any sense imaginable, monolithic, and has not been influenced by what has happened over time, with massive forces at work such as slavery, colonialism and socio-political systems such as imperialism, capitalism, Christianity, western education and apartheid.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, any approach on the African continent cannot afford not to take the vast indigenous knowledge systems of Africa seriously.

After the conclusion of a workshop<sup>20</sup> on contextual pastoral theory, it became clear that its emphasis of the contextual pastoral approach on relations and how we as

19 See Mkhize, V.V.O. (2016). 'Umsamo – The quest for an African-centred approach in pastoral care. Learning from the African traditions, culture, values, ancestral wisdom and African healing'. Paper presented at the trans-disciplinary workshop on contextual pastoral care in Africa, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 19 July.

20 A three-day workshop was held to discuss the relevance of contextual pastoral care for the African context with African scholars at the Faculty of theology at the Stellenbosch University from

human beings are connected to one another and previous generations resonates well with popular African cosmology. Mkhize (2016:8) states that contextual theory “resonates pretty well with how in our culture, as is the case in so many African cultures now in Southern Africa, with the idea of living a life that is interlinked to that of others through various chains of loyalties based on direct and indirect kinships.” In this regard, Africans are not only connected to one another but they are also multi-connected to their ancestors. Mkhize (2016:9) concludes: “There is a plethora of examples I could give, to show that what Boszormenyi-Nagy are articulating, shares so much with the philosophical ethos espoused at the Umsamo Institute. Now that we have found one another, the opportunities before us, are enormous. At the heart of it is the possibility of investing research resources on the theorisation of Umsamo, which I have begun doing. Also, as a way of indigenising pastoral care, the Umsamo African Institute has laid a foundation, and what remains, is for kindred minds and souls to come together and, as we say in my language, slaughter the beast.”<sup>21</sup> The journey to develop an approach that continuously represents the African context is of the utmost importance for a contextual pastoral care approach to be able to contribute to breaking through the intergenerational frozen conflict.

Another pertinent question is whether it is possible and appropriate to apply a therapeutic approach developed for a family context within a collective socio-political environment. This is indeed a very relevant question because in a therapeutic context, the focus is more on individuals and small groups, whereas in a socio-political context the focus is more on groups and communities, and therefore, the collective. Van den Berg-Seiffert (2015:165) indicates that Boszormenyi-Nagy himself refers to loyalties within families and the broader society, as well as within religious groups in the same manner.<sup>22</sup> Boszormenyi-Nagy (2000:167) grapples with the impact of criminality and political terrorism on a society, as it always has a devastating impact on innocent victims.<sup>23</sup> However, in no uncertain way, he states that there can be no justification, excuse or acceptance for the suppression of persecuted and innocent people (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000:171). With this in mind, he then focuses on the collective and socio-political context and realises that people become terrorists. For example, they develop destructive behaviours because there are limited spaces of trust where people with different loyalties can voice themselves. He bemoans that there are no peaceful channels through which exposed and suppressed groups, in terms of self-determination, are able to present their claims. There is no platform where ethnic, religious and radical groups can discuss their claims in a decent and legitimate way (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000:169). He correctly states that throughout history it was always clear that the supporters of governments continually rejected and distrusted groups that had a different loyalty obligation (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000:170).

11-13 October 2016.

- 21 The Umsamo Institute hosts a centre for contextual family healing and therapy. For more information on the work done by the Umsamo Institute, please refer to their website: <http://umsamo.org.za/wpp/>
- 22 van den Berg-Seiffert, C.C.L.H. (2015): “Ik sta erbuiten – maar ik sta wel te kijken” (“I’m on the outside – but I’m watching”). Zoetemeer: boekencentrum.
- 23 See Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (2000). *Grondbeginselen van de contextuele benadering*. (Fundamentals of the contextual approach). Haarlem: De Toorts.

Because there is no safe space for groups to communicate their claims, they have no choice but to resort to violence or conceal their loyalty. In this regard, we do not realise the impact of suppressed loyalty obligations on people's behaviour (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000:172). It is only then, when we are able to focus on distinguishing between real differences and mutual conflicting interests in a communal way that we can find a way to construct alternatives to replace the notion of endless hatred that acts as a chain reaction (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000:172). The key issue at stake here is the conflict created in societies, caused by exclusion because the loyalty of the other is different from that of those in power. As indicated earlier, the critical problem is that there is a lack of understanding and an inability to deal with the conflict in a constructive and life-giving way.

Rein Brouwer (2004:290) has done research within faith communities to explore whether the contextual pastoral approach is applicable in this context.<sup>24</sup> His research indicates that conflict is more dramatic in local faith communities, and that there is an inability to address these conflicts in a unified way. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that these conflicts bear witness to destructive justice, and assumes that these faith communities are in dire need of trust and acknowledgement (Brouwer, 2004:291). In this regard, he has, to my mind, illustrated that this approach is indeed applicable to the broader religious community.

Based on the discussion thus far, I want to highlight a few key concepts in the contextual pastoral care approach in relation to the theme of this chapter. The term "context" in the theory of the contextual pastoral care approach is not merely situational. Instead, the focus is to understand a person within the network of relationships (context) they find themselves in. This is particularly relevant for intergenerational relations. Nobody exists alone by him/herself. As humans, we are always connected to a significant "other," and in Africa, to even more significant "others." As the family is seen as the first relational network people are part of, the contextual pastoral care approach works with the assumption that every person has a father and mother no matter whether they can take care of the person or not. Beginning early in one's life, there is a movement of, what the contextual pastoral care approach calls, ethics (a deep value for justice and fairness) within relationships.<sup>25</sup> This entails mutual giving and receiving between parents and children, grandparents and children, and between significant others and children, and given the context of South Africa, between the perpetrators and victims of colonialism, and more recently, the apartheid policy (intergenerational). Thus, where these relationships are balanced and trustworthy it

- 24 Brouwer, R. (2004). 'Leiderschap in systemisch-contextueel perspectief. Friedman en Nagy over leiderschap (Leadership in systemic-contextual perspective. Friedman and Nagy on leadership)', in van Ark, J. and de Roest, H.P. (eds.) *De weg van de groep. Leidinggeven in gemeente en parochie* (The way of the group. Leadership in the congregation and parish). Zoetermeer: Meinema, 283-291.
- 25 Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner, *Between give and take*, p.58 and p.147. Also see Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner's (1986:420) description of the notion of ethics: "The notion of ethics is rooted in the ontology of the fundamental nature of living creatures, i.e. life is received from forbears and conveyed to posterity. Life is a chain of interlocking consequences linked to the interdependence of the parent and child generations. In human beings, relational ethics require people to assume responsibility for consequences. But consequence per se constitutes unavoidable, existential reality".



will influence the manner in which a person is able to give to the “other” (Meulink-Korf & van Rijn, 2016:14).<sup>26</sup> This is also why the contextual theory of Boszormenyi-Nagy referred to it as a trust-based theory (Meulink-Korf & van Rijn, 2016:7). The aim of this approach endeavours to restore trust in human relations, damaged by hurt and separation caused by conflict.<sup>27</sup> South Africans affected by the past need to seek ways to deal with the past trauma and restore the balance<sup>28</sup> (trust) in relations.

In order to transform and reverse a conflict within a relationship, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner’s (1986:176) relational ethic emphasises the core aspects of trustworthiness and justice. This is based on the assumption that all involved in the relationship have agreed to take responsibility to break the shackles of the intergenerational frozen conflict and to engage in a process of reconciliation and transformation. Trustworthiness is not necessarily present in a relationship; therefore, from the outset, those involved in the relationship should engage in a process that develops a balance between give and take. In this process, a person develops trust through giving and receiving, and by adhering to this principle a person is able to acknowledge the trustworthiness of the other. That is why Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:422) defines trustworthiness as follows: “Trustworthiness accrues on the side of the reliable, responsible, duly considerate partner in a relationship and is a characteristic of realistic, deserved trust” and “from an ethical perspective, trustworthiness is always earned over the long-term by balancing the consequences of give and take between two relatively reliable partners.” In this sense, then, those on all sides of the conflict are born within a context in which at times they are justified in receiving and at other times they are obliged to give. Thus, to develop trustworthiness in a relationship is an on-going process that demands commitment to that relationship.

In this approach, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:420) uses the concept of “rejunction” to assist both victims and perpetrators to engage in a process of connecting with and restoring relations with those whom they are in conflict. The intention of this concept is to enter into responsible dialogue<sup>29</sup> with the other, so that each person will experience the dialogue as beneficial to themselves and the other. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:420), rejunction characterises relationships in which family members choose to earn entitlement through self-

26 Meulink-Korf, H. and van Rijn, A. (2016). *The unexpected third Contextual pastoral, counselling and ministry: An introduction and reflection* (transl. Noeme Visser) Wellington: Christian Literature Fund Publishers.

27 According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:413), “Some conflicts of interests, needs and entitlements are inevitable between relating partners and are to be viewed as natural rather than pathological. Other interpersonal conflicts of interests are avoidable, however, and attempts to resolve all interpersonal conflicts of interests are unrealistic. A realistic therapeutic attitude is linked to working on inevitable conflicts (e.g. a capacity to tolerate real attitudinal differences-political, religious, social-that do not require joint decision-making. In any case, an effort to work on a foundation of underlying trust resources is always a more realistic therapeutic goal than designing an attack on symptoms.”

28 According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:420), the ultimate destination of people is to search for a balance.

29 Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner, *Between give and take*, p.415.

validation. As indicated earlier, the contextual pastoral care approach puts an emphasis on the ethical dimension and seeks to restore the balance within relations. This dimension should, however, not be confused with morals or dogma that is manipulated and forced from the outside (for example, a religious moral forced upon others). Rather, it should be understood as intrinsic justice that is determined by a dynamic balance of give and take within important existential relationships. The focus of the engagement between those in conflict is not merely for the sake of dialogue. Instead, the intention should be to take responsibility to seek transformative justice in the balance between give and take in order to restore existential relations.<sup>30</sup>

Therapeutically, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:418) indicate that the way to go about restoring the relationship is to listen carefully to the victim(s) and the perpetrator, and acknowledge their suffering and pain. In order to listen and assist in building a bridge within the intergenerational frozen conflict, it is particularly important to note that everyone who is part of this network of relationships is a subject, and is given the opportunity to speak. According to Botha (2014:41), the language required in this process is connecting language. This relational language does not reject or break down, but expresses the courage to touch fragile and painful situations. The aim is not just to confirm the negative, but also to look for positives aspects in the relationship and to name these too. Botha (2014:41)<sup>31</sup> indicates that Boszormenyi-Nagy looks for a gap that will open up the future. Language that connects thus strives to enable those involved to see each other—to acknowledge each other's humanity and even their fragility and what, in spite of this, they have been able to give and receive from each other. Mkize (2016:1) quotes Ngugi wa Thiong'o's words on the primacy of language and culture: "Language is what most helps in the movement of a community from *the state of being in itself to state of being for itself* and this self-awareness is what gives the community its spiritual strength to keep on reproducing its being as it continually renews itself in culture, in its power relations, and in its negotiations with its entire environment. It is its culture which enables a community to imagine and re-imagine itself in history" (*italics in original*).

Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:418) calls the method that will assist caregivers to listen and not to take sides "multidirected partiality," and defines it as follows: "Multidirected partiality is contextual therapy's chief therapeutic attitude and method... Methodologically, multidirected partiality takes the form of sequential siding with (and eventually *against*) member after family member. The therapist tries to emphasise with and credit everyone on a basis that actually merits crediting." According to Botha (2014:39), Boszormenyi-Nagy's aim is that in

30 Meulink-Korf, J.N. (2009). Verbindend waarnemen en werken: kerkelijke conflicten in contextueel perspectief. (Connecting observing and working: Ecclesiastical conflicts in a contextual perspective). *Tijdschrift Conflicthantering*, 4(6):12-17.

31 Botha, T.J. (2014). 'Ons sal mekaar nie los nie' 'n Kwalitatiewe ondersoek na die aard van die onderlinge verbondenheid van leraars binne die Verenigende Ring van Stellenbosch'. ('We will not leave each other' A qualitative inquiry into the nature of the interdependence of pastors within the Uniting Circuit of Stellenbosch'). Unpublished master's thesis. Stellenbosch University [Online]. Viewed from [https://scholar.sun.ac.za/bitstream/handle/.../botha\\_ons\\_2014.pdf](https://scholar.sun.ac.za/bitstream/handle/.../botha_ons_2014.pdf) [Accessed 18 February 2017].

therapy there should always be an encounter together with dialogue: this is what “trust based therapy” requires for healing to take place. Multidirected partiality is very helpful when we create platforms for people from different loyalties to meet in dialogue, face the conflict, and work towards breaking the intergenerational frozen conflict. Multidirected partiality entails that we pay equal attention to the pain (destructive justice) as to the longing for trust, and through acknowledgement of merits in a space where the conflicting parties can talk and develop to regain their trust. Forgiveness and reconciliation that is forced by outsiders, or by the victim or perpetrator, or is presented in a simplistic way, does not restore the trust that is required to build a bridge between those in conflict in the relationship.

It is always important to understand that where conflict within a relation is a reality there is always an invisible ledger, kept intact by those within the conflict. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:417), “The ledger is a calculus concerned with the balance between the accumulating merits and debts of the two sides of any relationship. Just how much entitlement or indebtedness each party has at a given time depends on the fairness of give-and-take that exists between them.” In this sense, numerous constructive and destructive narratives based on the relations human beings have with one another compile the ledger. We, as human beings, then communicate these narratives from one generation to the next. Botha (2014:32) indicates that Boszormenyi-Nagy describes a number of factors (excluding race and gender) that can either contribute to the transmission of constructive change and transformation to the next generation or can have a destructive effect that will limit the next generation and lead to stagnation. These factors are:

- Biological and blood relationships;
- A divided family history, which brings both acquired assets and liabilities from a previous generation;
- Traditions, faith traditions, norms and values, beliefs around justice, the arrangements and rules of the family system, and roles, etc., that have been passed down from previous generations; and
- The conservation and continuation of life (procreation).

Although these factors focus on destructive family narratives that are transferred from one generation to the next, they are equally applicable to the transference of constructive and destructive historical, social and religious narratives passed down to subsequent generations. Destructive narratives normally have deep-seated roots in the history of a generation. In his own life and in working with families, Boszormenyi-Nagy discovered that loyalty is an irrevocable bond between family members.<sup>32</sup> Meulink-Korf and van Rijn (2016:79) quotes Boszormenyi-Nagy to emphasise the importance of the irrevocability of relations: “My father will always remain my father, even though he is buried thousands of miles from here.”<sup>33</sup> In essence, one should not underestimate the deep-rooted sense of family and community loyalty, which plays a key role in the transference of narratives from the one generation to the next. To me, deep-rooted loyalty is particularly relevant to the African context.

32 Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner, *Between give and take*, p.418.

33 Here refers to his country of birth – Hungary.

In order to understand the depth of this transference it is not possible to limit loyalty to just a psychological memory, an emotional feeling, or knowledge we have of the past. It entails much more than a particular cause and effect understanding of the past. It is about life-giving and our ability to create meaning. Its frame of reference is trust, merit, commitment and action, rather than the “psychological” functions of “feeling” and “knowing.” In this sense, loyalty is always present (sometimes more visible and sometimes not) in trust and trustworthiness, in merits and credits, in actions that help us to understand what is fair and what is not. It is clear from the theory that loyalty has the ability to develop quality relationships. To explain this, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:315) refer to two types of loyalties - vertical and horizontal.<sup>34</sup> In terms of vertical loyalty, grandparents, parents and children connect to each other by an asymmetrical vertical loyalty. Therefore, this loyalty is then intergenerational and irreversible. The concept of legacy is helpful to explain what is meant by loyalty, as it intertwines with the concept of loyalty.

Legacy is a positive concept because it is the ethical obligation to take what is inherited from previous generations, and to integrate it into the present in such a way that it can make a constructive contribution to future generations. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:418) define it as follows: “Legacy is an obligation to help free posterity from crippling habits, traditions and delegations of previous generations.” In addition, they call the commitment to give back and pass on to the next generation “trans-generational solidarity” (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986:129-133). This, they explain with the well-known statement: “We benefit from the past; we owe to the future.” The inheritance passed on is not only limited to biological relationships, but also includes a common history, political ideologies, religious beliefs, family traditions, economic privileges, as well as concepts such as justice, laws, etc. In this way, legacy functions as a bridge between the past, the present, and the future of a generation. However, legacy has the potential to become destructive when one generation transfers such narratives to the next generation. In this way, a destructive legacy actively distorts the balance and keeps the frozen conflict intact. This occurs when, based on the past, the preferences or beliefs about what is important for one generation (parents) weighs heavier than the yet uncultivated potential of the next generation (children). These are then unconsciously projected onto the next generation(s) with the expectation to be fulfilled, thereby shifting what is of importance to the next generation into the background, and bringing forth the preferences and beliefs of the past and current generation as the core narrative.

The second type of loyalty that Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:315) indicate is the horizontal type. They describe horizontal loyalty as the choice between individuals within the same generation (friends, partners, colleagues, etc.). To them, this loyalty is symmetrical and reflexive (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986:417). Within the relationships where horizontal loyalty is present there cannot be one core ledger or narrative that exists for everyone. From the beginning, each person or community is involved in numerous relations that represent many balances on a number of different levels that may or may not directly form part of the conflict. It

34 Meulink-Korf and van Rijn, *The unexpected third*, p.16.



is needless to say that all these diverse balances influence each other, and therefore, are never static. It is always dynamic, and each person or community involved in the conflict is constantly placing them on the scale. In this way, the needle will oscillate a little bit more ... a little bit less ... first by the one person and then by the other (Botha, 2014:19).

What one needs to be aware of is the danger of when vertical and horizontal loyalty is undermined or not recognised because it has the ability to be concealed and become invisible.<sup>35</sup> The influence and impact of invisibility could be to postulate in ways that illustrate destructive entitlement, such as aggression, criminality, addiction, and gangs, as an extended family. The result of invisible loyalty can develop into conflicts within relations if a person is not able to openly demonstrate their loyalty to the different people they are connected to. The term “conflicting loyalties” is more appropriate in a broader context, than only within the family context. According to Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:418), “Loyalty and loyalty conflict are, therefore, difficult to separate. For loyalty conflict applies to a situation in which a person is caught between two explicitly competing loyalty objects.” In this regard, it refers to being loyal to your religion, culture or an ideology such as apartheid. Conflicting loyalties occur when a white son (current generation), for example, is in conflict with his white parents (previous generation) regarding apartheid. Normally, the conflict is destructive, and therefore, dialogue is not possible. What the son needs to do is to develop insight into the way his parents grew up and sift the knowledge gained. Insight is about acknowledging the context of his parents, but not absorbing everything from that context. He only has to take what is relevant from that relation and not everything, as is sometimes expected. In this way, he takes responsibility for the past and decides to pass constructive narratives on to the next generation. Invisible loyalties are indeed an example of how a person or a community can be stuck in an intergenerational frozen conflict.

Due to the importance of loyalty and legacy within a generation, it forms a central part of the relational ethical dimension. The complexity or danger is in the fact that people can develop their meaning and identity from this ethical relational dimension. When a destructive narrative becomes the basis for a person and community to form their meaning and identity, it could be devastating to the current as well as subsequent generations. However, according to Boszormenyi-Nagy’s theory, people immersed in relationships where intergenerational frozen conflict exists are able to transform or reverse these destructive narratives. This is possible as all sides of the conflict carry just as much responsibility to balance the relation in a fair way and deepen the trust. In this regard, Meulink-Korf (2009:17) states: “To whom will I be unfaithful or who do you fear if you are unfaithful when you work towards ending the conflict?”

This requires continual sensitivity regarding when to give and when to receive, when to focus on one’s own needs, and when to notice and acknowledge the needs of others. Thus, if the process of give and take is central to relational justice, then those in the relationship will need to be aware of guilt and guilt feelings, as it has

35 Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner, *Between give and take*, p.417.

the ability to damage relationships. Martin Buber (1983:65) indicates that guilt is existential, and therefore, it cannot just be a feeling.<sup>36</sup> Guilty feelings involve the anxious fear of rejection thereby damaging one's sense of self-worth or self-image. In contrast, existential guilt is the honest acknowledgement and recognition that my or your actions have damaged the order of the human world.<sup>37</sup> This, then, entails the need to take responsibility to deal with the guilt in a way that can do justice to the relation. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:420), however, indicate that when we neglect to take responsibility to deal with the guilt it will develop into what they call a "revolving slate." They define this as follows: "...It is a relational consequence in which a person's substitutive revenge against one person eventually creates a new victim. The term "slate" refers to a fixed account between people that ordinarily merits fair consideration. Instead, it gets turned against a substitute and innocent target who is treated as if he or she were the original debtor." In terms of the family, the adult child "pays back" the debt owed to him by his parents through destructive actions, either to self or to others. To me, this is also true in terms of the current generation's reaction to the debt of past generations, as the second generation always claims the injustices of the previous generation.<sup>38</sup> This reaction leads to destructive entitlement and can manifest itself in two ways - either to choose not to give or to choose not to receive—and both will have a stagnating effect on any relationship. Such a person neither notices his/her own destructive behaviour, nor opens up space for another to restore the balance. White guilt based on colonialism and apartheid, according to the theory of Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:416), asserts that it is important to settle the account of guilt. This guilt does not only rest with the person or the community, but in the transaction that has disturbed the order, namely, in the relational reality. The restoring of the balance or the settling of the account can only occur when those who have damaged the relationship take responsibility to engage in a process with those who have been harmed. This is why Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:182) state that the legacy of ancestral shame and guilt requires redress and exoneration insofar as they are possible.

Within the process of settling the account, the notion of punishment comes to the fore. According to Botha (2014:38), Boszormenyi-Nagy had difficulty accepting that any punishment, which did not fit the extent of the debt, would be able to restore the damaged order. Punishment had more to do with addressing the sense of injustice, but did not address the damage done: what the person had broken still remained. This is indeed very relevant to the South African context, as it raises the question whether the victim can just accept the acknowledgement of the perpetrator and offer forgiveness without any justice. As Tutu (1999:221) states in his book *No future without forgiveness*, "Confession, forgiveness and reparation, wherever feasible,

36 Buber, M. (1983). 'Schuld en schuldgevoelens (Guilt and guilt feelings)', in de Bruin, T. (red.), *Adam waar ben je?* (Adam where are you?). Hilversum: B. Folkertsma Stichting, pp.208-235.

37 For Buber existential guilt occurs when someone injures an order of the human world whose foundations he/she knows and recognizes, as those of his/her own existence and of all common human existence (Buber, 1998, p.117).

38 See *Between give and take* by Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:390) on how the survivors and their children (different generations) react to the legacy of the past.

form part of a continuum.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, acknowledgement of guilt requires more than mere words, such as: “I apologise for apartheid, I am sorry about our past, and now we can forgive and forget and move on.” When the perpetrator expresses guilt, it should be an honest acknowledgement and recognition that he or she has damaged the order through his or her actions.<sup>40</sup> Acknowledging guilt entails that the perpetrator will grieve because of what is broken and will address his or her existential guilt.

The victim should not offer forgiveness to the perpetrator in a cheap or hastened manner. One should remember that Boszormenyi-Nagy did not use the word forgiveness because it is often used too cheaply and mostly does not change the ethics between victims and perpetrators, between relationships, and between generations and cultures. Forgiveness that does not deal with the core issue that has damaged the order of humanity cannot restore the damage done to humanity (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1996:29). In the process of restoring the relationship, one must never underestimate the potential for power play involved in this process.<sup>41</sup> This could accrue when the perpetrator confesses to the victim from a position of self-created power.<sup>42</sup> Due to the power, the one who is on the receiving end of the deed is then obliged to offer forgiveness. The person who has damaged the order of humanity is thus the one who should forgive. The person who has committed the deed is not in the position to forgive. This lies with the one who has damaged the order. Forgiveness depends on the generosity of the forgiver (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986:416). Now, the power rests with him/her. Forgiveness in itself does not lead to a balance in the relationship, but rather to a reversal of power, thereby leaving the situation in the domain of guilt feelings. The tragedy is that there has been no true encounter and even less attention given to the process of making the

39 Tutu, D. (1999). *No future without forgiveness*. London: Rider.

40 See Kayser, U. (1998). 'Creating the past Improvising the present'. Unpublished Honours thesis, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Cape Town. For Kayser, a perpetrator is someone who actively perpetrates the violation of the human rights of others, and a bystander is someone who was present during the violation of the human rights of others, but declines to say or do anything about it. Apart from a perpetrator and a bystander, there is also a beneficiary. Also, see Thesnaar, C.H. (2001). 'Die proses van heling en versoening: 'n Pastoraal-hermeneutiese ondersoek van die dinamika tussen slagoffer en oortreder binne 'n post-WVK periode'. (The process of healing and reconciliation: A pastoral hermeneutical investigation of the dynamics between victim and offender within a post-TRC period) Unpublished DTh thesis, Stellenbosch University. He describes beneficiaries as those who were not actively or passively involved, but who benefited from the apartheid system, economically, politically, physically, either socially, or in a religious way.

41 Pollyfeyt, D. (1996). 'Het onvergeeflijke vergeven? Een etische analyse van kwaad en versoening. (Forgive the unforgivable? An ethical analysis of evil and reconciliation)', in Burggraave, R. and De Tavernier, J. (red) *Terugkeer van de wraak?* (Return of revenge?) Averbode: Gooi en Sticht, pp.155-178. He writes on the way perpetrators use power during reconciliation.

42 See Holtmann, B. (1998). Victim Empowerment. *Social Work Practice*, 1:8-14. He describes the United Nations definition of a victim: "... someone who, individually or collectively, has suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws ... including those laws prescribing criminal abuse of power ... the term victim also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependents of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimisation".

guilty party un-guilty. In order to restore the relationship the perpetrator will need to be set free from his or her guilt.

Although Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986:416) do not understand the concept of guilt in a theological way, they offer a different perspective in dealing with the guilt, and that is, to spread the guilt. Their theory entails that they do not want to load the guilt onto one person and then excommunicate the guilty party from the community, as that would be detrimental to restoring the relationship. To spread the guilt would entail placing the actions done and the cause of the guilt within previous generations. The concept they use to explain this is "exoneration," which they define as the "... process of lifting the load of culpability off the shoulders of a given person whom heretofore we may have blamed. It differs from forgiveness. The act of forgiveness usually retains the assumption of guilt and extends the forgiver's generosity to the person who injures her or him. Offering forgiveness, a person now refrains from holding the culprit accountable and from demanding punishment" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986:416). Exoneration deeply concerns trust, responsibility, accountability and justice. This implies a commitment to actively engage in dialogue, and negotiate, address and transform the challenges of the current context in order to establish a shared future that is sustainable for all involved. It is about taking responsibility for the past in order to make sure that what we pass on to the next generation is constructive. In my view, this is more in line with what Tutu (1999:220) refers to when he argues that the act of forgiveness is a change for a new beginning not only for the victim but also for the perpetrator.

## CONCLUSION

After reflecting on the timeframe, the content of frozen conflict, and the theory of contextual pastoral care, I am of the opinion that it does offer an approach that can assist in breaking through the cycle of intergenerational frozen conflict within an African context. This will, however, be neither simplistic nor easy. On the contrary, it will be challenging, yet rewarding. This approach helps us to understand that victims and perpetrators exist within a network of relationships. These relationships are not relationships we can choose, as we are bound by their legacy. These relationships are connected through loyalty, whether it is visible or invisible. The victims and perpetrators are therefore products of the legacies of the South African past. Due to colonialism and apartheid, South Africans are still currently carrying the weight of relations and trust that was damaged and destroyed. These relationships buckle under the weight of the guilt and shame that arises from an experience or existence of destructive entitlements/rights. In this chapter, I presented an argument for a process of transforming relationships in order to break through the intergenerational frozen conflict that victims and perpetrators would need to take responsibility to enter into dialogue with one another and be accountable to address the destructive narratives and build new ones. Caregivers within local religious communities are obliged to create safe spaces where victims and perpetrators can engage with one another in a non-judgmental way, to embody give and take within a space of trust, and specifically, transformative justice. We need to listen to the conflicting loyalties



people struggle with. This will enable the intergenerational frozen conflict to come to the surface via a narrative, and thereby identify connections and balances, which make healing possible.

The theory of contextual pastoral care reminds us that trustworthiness is the fulcrum of all vital relationships. In these spaces public theologians as caregivers should assist participants to search for the tiny jewels of mutual care, love, and experiences that lead to hope and trust. This is why the theory of contextual pastoral care emphasises that only trust and transformative justice can break the legacy, and therefore, the intergenerational frozen conflict. It is of grave importance to resolve the conflict and facilitate a greater understanding between people and cultures in general, but also between groups, clans, villages, races, as well as perpetrators and victims. If we do not contribute to restore trust in relations and transformative justice does not take place, it will take generations to change the legacy of our past in South Africa.

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