

# A Critical Analysis of the Relevancy and Practicality of Reconstruction Theology in Africa with Appropriate Critique and a Proposed Way Forward

Chesosi Bonface Kimutai

Part time Lecturer, Kabarak University, Department of Theology and Biblical studies and an Anglican Church of Kenya priest.

\*Corresponding Author: Chesosi Bonface Kimutai

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15814070](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15814070)

ABSTRACT	Article History
<p><i>Africa is a continent beset by a myriad of challenges, catastrophes, poverty scourges, diseases and death. Benezet Bujo Succinctly describes the situation as the mass poverty of Africa. Anup Shah in his article conflicts in Africa is categorical about the stark reality of tragedy and absurdities in Africa that is both natural and manmade and the apathy that goes with it, "despite decades of conflict, death and tragedy, coverage of issues in Africa has been ignored, oversimplified or excessively focused on limited aspects." The status quo has persistent unrelentlessly despite various interventions cultural, social, philosophical and theological. This sense of pessimism, impotency and utter despair is the backdrop for the quest of a new theological formulation of African reconstruction theology. The reconstruction theology according to its brainchild Prof Jesse Mugambi is "a reconstruction paradigm." This is a complete paradigm shift that was precipitated by certain salient factors. First it is historical in the sense that reconstruction theology is inextricably intertwined with the end of cold war and the vanquishing of Apartheid and colonialism and the anticipation of a great era. This phraseology was coined by Prof Mugambi during the General committee of All African Conference of Churches (AACC) on 30th March 1990. Mugambi categorically stated that: "Reconstruction is the new priority for African nations in the 1990's. The churches and their theologians need to respond to these new priorities in relevant fashion, to facilitate this process of reconstruction. Secondly, the sheer frustration that was evident in Africa of the intractable African problems and the desire for a more a pragmatic theology that will seek solutions rather than continual vicious circle of blame game. Thirdly, there was the overarching need of integrating other social sciences into theology to give it the gumption and expertise to solve contemporary social and economic problems in Africa.</i></p> <p><b>KEYWORDS:</b> Reconstruction theology, African Christian Theology, Liberation theology and systematic theology.</p>	<b>Original Research Article</b>
	<b>Received: 12-05-2025</b>
	<b>Accepted: 25-06-2025</b>
	<b>Published: 05-07-2025</b>
	<p><b>Copyright © 2025 The Author(s):</b> This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p><b>Citation:</b> Chesosi Bonface Kimutai ; A Critical Analysis of the Relevancy and Practicality of Reconstruction Theology in Africa with Appropriate Critique and a Proposed Way Forward, UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHSS), 1(3), 35-44</p>
	

## I. Introduction

Africa is a continent beset by a myriad of challenges, catastrophes, poverty scourges, diseases and death. Benezet Bujo Succinctly describes the situation as the mass poverty of Africa. <sup>1</sup>Anup Shah in his article conflicts in Africa is categorical about the stark reality of

tragedy and absurdities in Africa that is both natural and manmade and the apathy that goes with it, "despite decades of conflict, death and tragedy, coverage of issues in Africa has been ignored, oversimplified or excessively focused on limited aspects." <sup>2</sup> The status quo has persistent unrelentlessly despite various interventions

<sup>1</sup> Benezet BuJo, *Africa Theology in social context*, trans J O Donohue (Nairobi: Pauline publication, 1992), p 66.

<sup>2</sup> Anup Shah, *Conflicts in Africa*. [www.global.issues.Com](http://www.global.issues.Com). Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2017 15: 32 GMT

cultural, social, philosophical and theological. This sense of pessimism, impotency and utter despair is the backdrop for the quest of a new theological formulation of African reconstruction theology.

The reconstruction theology according to its brainchild Prof Jesse Mugambi is “a reconstruction paradigm.”<sup>3</sup> This is a complete paradigm shift that was precipitated by certain salient factors. First it is historical in the sense that reconstruction theology is inextricably intertwined with the end of cold war and the vanquishing of Apartheid and colonialism and the anticipation of a great era. This phraseology was coined by Prof Mugambi during the General committee of All African Conference of Churches (AACC) on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1990. Mugambi categorically stated that: “Reconstruction is the new priority for African nations in the 1990’s. The churches and their theologians need to respond to these new priorities in relevant fashion, to facilitate this process of reconstruction. Secondly, the sheer frustration that was evident in Africa of the intractable African problems and the desire for a more a pragmatic theology that will seek solutions rather than continual vicious circle of blame game. Thirdly, there was the overarching need of integrating other social sciences into theology to give it the gumption and expertise to solve contemporary social and economic problems in Africa.

As a result the process of promulgating Reconstruction Theology will require intense rigor, deliberate integration and brilliant innovation the above mentioned lofty expectations of Reconstruction Theology. As a result the thesis of this paper is to critically highlight the gist of reconstruction theology the opportunities and challenges of this theological formulation before giving the appropriate critique and suggestion how to integrate it to other African theologies to make it more relevant, practical and authentic to the African situation and context.

## II. The conception and Exposition of African Reconstruction Theology

Reconstruction theology is a brain child of Prof. Jesse Mugambi in his epoch making paper the future of the church and the church of the future in Africa presented on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1990. The gist of the paper was to reflect on the changing theological discourse after the demise of Apartheid and the collapse of the iron curtain<sup>4</sup>. This was a clarion call for a paradigm shift in theological formulation from liberation to reconstruction. The thrust of this new theology is about reconstruction about rebuilding and about new things. Mugambi was

categorical that:

“Reconstruction is the new priority in African nations in the 1990s. The churches and their theologians will need to respond to this new priorities in relevant fashion, to facilitate this process of reconstruction. The process will require considerable efforts of reconciliation and confidence building. It will also require re-orientation and retraining”.<sup>5</sup>

The reconstruction theology must be commended for correctly reading the sign of times Mugambi is credited for seeking to be relevant to the African situation and context. This is because the focus of reconstruction theology is advocacy of human rights, the inclusive law making process. It seeks to promote and entrench peace, justice and reconstruction. It lays new foundation for all political structures in rebuilding in the prevalent decadent and sinful structures of the societies that generate and sustain social-economic poverty, suffering, marginalization and death.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently reconstruction theology sought to address real challenges that the Africans dealt with at that time. It was appropriate to the African context of the 1990. Hence the reconstruction theology was a contextualized vision of the common good rooted in the experience of Jesus of Nazareth and it endeavors to proclaim the values of the Kingdom of God that ought to be integrated with the process of democratic, accountable and transparent governance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the 1990s the Sub-Saharan Africa world was a litany of contemporary social economic problems that were mirrored by social inequalities and injustices that were perpetuated by political dictatorship and harsh realities of everyday life; the militarization of every African states, the arbitrary incarceration of citizen. In the guise of national security, the influx of refugees, the failed states, the negative implication of debt servicing, unemployment, epidemics, the pandemics of malaria and HIV and AIDS, drought and famine, proliferation of rebel groups, incessant evil wars, disillusionment and a sense of betrayal by government after thirty years of independence, the clamor for individual right and Rwandese genocide.<sup>7</sup>

All the challenges did the set the stage for a need for a paradigm shift in theological methodology and the lacuna

<sup>5</sup> Jesse N R Mugambi, *The future of the Church of the Church of the future in Africa*. In Chipanda J.B Karamanga, Mugambi, J.N.K and Omari C.K eds. *The church of Africa: Towards a Theology of Reconstruction*(Nairobi:AACC,1991),2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Marie Hycacinthe Quenum, *a Responsible reconstruction Theology for Today's Africa* [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) retrieved on 26 March 2017 at 1428GMT.

<sup>3</sup> J.N.R Mugambi, *From Liberation to reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War*. (Nairobi: EAEP, 1995), P 40.

<sup>4</sup> Julius Gathogo, *Jesse Mugambi, Formative Factors, Schools of Religion and Theology*, university of Kwazulu Natal.

was filled by reconstruction theology.<sup>8</sup>

This reconstruction theology that was championed by J.N.K Mugambi of Kenya, John Mary Walligo of Uganda and Charles Villa Vicencio of South Africa. This Theology was anchored on the Biblical narrative of Nehemiah's reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. It analogizes rebuilding with the reconstructing the deposits of faith in according to the needs of a just and loving society to bring about social change and economic transformation in the perspective of Jesus message of the love and peace.<sup>9</sup>

This was a theology that sought to interrogate the unjust and oppressive systems and to seek to address them. It is evident that reconstruction theology was an optimistic theology that clearly understood the beginning of a new era.

It sought to delink itself from the perennial and incessant shifting of blame to the European and missionary and hence we should take responsibility for our action and future by seeking to be responsible in reconstructing our countries. The challenge with this reconstruction theology is that it buries its head in sand and it is presumptuous to imply that the theology of liberation and in collaborative theologies were irrelevant after the collapse of the Berlin wall. This view is romantic but not practical for it wrongly assumes that issues and challenges

Reconstruction theology is very rich in style but indeed very sparse on substance. Its theological formulation lacks a coherent and systematic Biblical foundation. The Nehemiah narrative of reconstruction also entails the theology of liberation when in the book Nehemiah challenged oppressive governors and sought with Ezra to make social justice an integral part of the message of reconstruction this evident in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Hence it is true that reconstruction theology should be inextricably intertwined with liberation. Theology and contextualization without which reconstruction theology will be a sham that deals with issues superficially.

Reconstruction Theology is credited to Prof Jesse K Mugambi as the brainchild. He is credited for "reading the signs" of time and acting appropriately according.<sup>10</sup> It goes without say that Jesse Mugambi was spot on in comprehending the signs of time. The collapse of the iron curtain, the fall of communism, the end of colonialism and apartheid era with the release of Nelson Mandela from incarceration on 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1990. There was optimism in Africa and this necessitated the need to have a new theological model not based on liberation but on reconstruction.

There were also contemporary social challenges that

necessitated the need for reconstruction Theology that was pragmatic and result oriented. The Reconstruction theology sought to address the issues. On food crisis the reconstruction theology uses the Biblical passages where God feed his people in both the old and New Testament to authenticate the fact that God wants his people to have enough to feed on. The desert experience in the Old Testament and Jesus feeding the five Thousand illustrates that God want people to have enough.

As a result the current food crisis is a result of oppressive historical factors, where Africans have taken the growing and eating exotic food that are less adoptable to the local ecosystems, which are more expensive to grow with less production. Hence they advocated the going back to the roots and growing traditional foods like Cassava and Yams.<sup>11</sup> This view is noble however it is very naïve, in the sense that it fails to understand the paternalistic influence of great superpowers on Agriculture. It buries its head in sand in the unfair distribution of land has been propagated by African elites who holds large chunks of land at the expense of masses languishing in abject poverty and living in squalid conditions. The truth of the matter is that reconstruction theology is very naïve and only seeks to treat symptoms of the disease and it lacks the gumption and vitality to address the underlying issues that can be addressed by an integrated approach of theology that combined elements of liberation theology, in contextualization theology and feminist theology to address the problems. On the child abuse an interesting analysis of Gen 1: 27 ends in supporting artificial family planning. The lack of family planning is seen as responsible for the increase of child abuse in Africa. It is evident that the proponents of reconstruction proposed dynamic pragmatic solutions to real problems in Africa. The reconstruction theology has correctly identified the contemporary social and economic problems in Africa that includes that includes food insecurity, life style diseases, the Aids pandemic, the land issues, joblessness and economic doldrums hence the diagnosis of reconstruction theology is very commendable in fact it is very accurate. Where the rubber meets the road is in the prescribed solution that lacks clarity and a clear blue print or marshal plan. The roots, as well as the symptoms of the problems need to be clearly understood so that a sustainable and well analyzed solution can be given to the perennial African problems.

It is a leap in the dark adage if the proponents of reconstruction theology think that they can resolve the contemporary social, religious and economical problems without reference to liberation, feminist and contextualization Theological formulation in Africa. As a result it is imperative that the writer critically examine the assertion of reconstruction theology vis-à-vis the Biblical witness, the African World view, reason to ascertain its

---

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> David Kuria, *The reconstruction of Africa by Theologians*.web.peacelink.it retrived on 22 February 2017 at 1933GMT.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

vitality on Biblical fidelity, African authenticity and practical viability. Hence it is imperative at this juncture to examine critically each facet, assertion and nuance of reconstruction Theology with a view of improving it to be faithful to the Biblical message, the African context and situation.

### III. A critical Review of the major premises of the Reconstruction Theology

Reconstruction Theology portends to present a theological formulation that is completely new and detached from the liberation and inculturation theologies. Reconstruction theology proposes to progress from the rhetoric and theoretical oriented liberation and inculturation theology. As Prof Jesse Mugambi, in an interview Julius Gathogo that is quoted in the article story telling as a methodology in developing a theology of Reconstruction, eloquently stated that,

Liberation tends to be focused on the past (while)

reconstruction is focused on the future. The exile narrative provides another paradigm on the basis of which oppressed people can find encouragement. Ezra – Nehemiah provides a paradigm rather than different from Moses and Joshua in the exodus narrative, and that Ezra and Nehemiah in the exile narrative. The leadership of John the Baptist and Jesus may be constructed with that of Calphas and Therod in the New Testament we can also contrast the leadership the leadership of St. Peter and St. Paul studied in this way, the theme of the reconstruction stands high a pedestal focusing on the constructive future rather than the destructive past.<sup>12</sup>

The assertion that liberation focuses on the past and reconstruction on the future is untenable. The truth is that a theology that does not look at the past in the ivory tower and the theology that does not look into the future are retrogressive and irrelevant. Hence if reconstruction theology is not looking into the past it is in danger of being utopian and not to address the real challenges facing the African continent in its theologizing. The predisposition of reconstruction theology to seek to sever link with other theological formulation in Africa is a non starter which will eventually inhibit its effectiveness in dealing with issues that it seek to address and will be shooting itself in the head so to speak. Reconstruction theology if it has to make sense it must build on the foundation already laid by liberation Theology and the enculturation and or contextualization theology. As a result if reconstruction theology will not integrate the fundamentals of contextualization theology and liberation theology will be impotent in dealing with Africans situation and context. Reconstruction theology needs to supplement rather than supplant liberation and

enculturation theology. The premise that the Exodus narrative and the post Exilic narrative have no correction cannot be sustained by sound Biblical Exegesis and hermeneutics. It goes without say that the context and historical situation of Exodus and post exilic narratives are very different. However, the story of capacity and being in exile in Egypt and Babylon is the same. The cry from liberation from God is evident in both cases as you study Exodus 1-3 and Psalms 137 in both instances there was an over whelming desire for liberation. The liberation from Egypt and Babylonia was in both instances there was cultural and political oppression and Economic exploitation and there was an overwhelming desire for liberation. The liberation from Egypt and Babylonia was both instances not an end to itself rather there was an occupation reconstruction that was subsequent. The story of Joshua in the conquest and Nehemiah's rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The story of obstacles, hostile opposition and apostasy of the Israelites run through the two narratives. However, at the end of the two both occupation and rebuilding of the occupation was successful by divine enablement. As a result the assertion that the narratives of the Exodus and the post Exilic were in contrast in not based on solid Exegesis but on observing the superficial differences without identifying the real differences that are not crystal clear as the proponents of reconstruction theology have articulated. The comparison that Mugambi has between Jesus and John the Baptist and Herod and Caiaphas is in bad taste and cannot be made in relation with the contrast between liberation Theology and reconstruction Theology. This can be misconstrued to imply the haughtiness and snobbishness of the proponents of the reconstruction Theology at the expense of other alternative model of theology in Africa. They should be complementing not competing with other forms of theology. They should be augmenting and not lambasting against other models. It is the researchers considered opinion that reconstruction theology is a form of liberation theology. The same sentiments are echoed by Robert Scheilter who affirms that reconstruction Theology is not is, "a different kind of liberating theology, because the opportunity is rare,"<sup>13</sup> This implies of necessity that reconstruction Theology is not a new Theology but rather a new garb in the theological formulations that were prevalent in Africa at the time of its inception.

African reconstruction theology is based on a historical conception of theology that is linear and progress to its perfection in reconstruction theology. As Ka Mana clearly captures this historical development with the first stage being the missionary theologies of tabula rasa this

<sup>12</sup> Julius Gathogo, Jesse Mugambi's Pedigree:

*Formative Factors, School of Religion and Theology, University of Kwazulu Natal, p13 uir.unisa.ac.za Retrieved on 19 May 2017 at 1340GMT.*

<sup>13</sup> Robert J Schreiter, *The New Catholicity Theology between the global and the local* (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books), P110-111.



was the church planting stage and African theological formulation is at its infancy or completely not there and the missionary theology is the second stage is the theologies of adaptation, indigenization and enculturation. This is where the missionary Theology is challenged and there is a desire to promulgate an African theology. The third stage is the development of an African theology which emphasized the exodus motif that emphasized a future of dignity freedom and prosperity. The fourth and climax stage is that of reconstruction Theology which advocates for the end of new colonialism. It is future sensitive not past sensitive. It calls on Africa to take full charge of its destiny.<sup>14</sup> This historical progression is indeed very Western in orientation where there is linear concept of time and history. The truth is that this progression is not as clear cut as projected by See Ka Mana because in different there are those Africa the development was different there are those African initiated churches that began by rejecting the missionary theology from the onset and they did not begin at the first rather than at the second or third stage. The case of African initiated churches when observed clearly defies the four stages that have been identified with the proponents of reconstruction Theology. It is not a proven fact that you will progression of the African Theology must mechanically follow the identified stages.

African Theology is organic consequently it can even jump a stage or two. The stages do not cater for relapse or recapitulation that has always happened in Theological formulations. Solomon in Ecclesiasties captures this truth when he states that there is nothing new under the sun hence the cyclic development of theology is more accurate for it captures and accommodates all facets of theological development which has progress and relapse and progress. The other important factor is that African Theology was brought from the primitive church theologian like Origen, Tertullian and St. Augustine were African and their input was not captured in the historical development of African Theology according to the reconstruction theology.

The reconstruction Theology right identifies the significance of Songs and stories in the formulation of African Theological formulation. As Bolaji Idowu, candidly states that.

Songs constitutes a rich heritage for the whole of African for Africans are always Singing and poetry, they express themselves in this way, all their Joys and Sorrow Their hopes and fears about the future, find an outlet. Singing is always a vehicle conveying certain sentiments or truths. When songs are connected with rituals they convey the faith of

worshippers from the heart-faith in the deity, belief in and about divinities, assurances and hopes about the present and with regard to the hereafter.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that songs are an integral part of African Theological formulation, Prof Jesse Mugambi in his Theologizing. However, the tragedy is that when Prof Jesse Mugambi does his reconstruction of individual reconstruction. The cites four “revival songs”, “Amazing grace” Teach me thy way Lord,” “Take my life and let it be constructed” and “Just as I am without one plea.”<sup>16</sup> This hymns that he uses have challenges with his literal interpretation of hymns and sometimes the songs are interpolated to suit the needs of Prof Mugambi reconstruction Theology. The most serious indictment however is that these hymns are from a Western perspective that may not be relevant to the African Context and situation. Hence the reconstruction Theology formulated here may not be authentically African. There is need for reconstruction Theology to include African hymns in their theological formulation which defeats the purpose of reconstruction theology being an African Theology that does not utilize the African hymns and songs in theological formulation.

The other bottleneck of reconstruction Theology is that it does not enrich itself with the plethora of rich African oral tradition and stories. Reconstruction Theology is mostly written in abstract Jargon that is the preserve of the elites and the literate. But for it to make sense reconstruction Theology in the contemporary Africa it must have to involve young and old narrative stories on Reconstruction stories like those of Asunta Wagura on her resiliency in the fight against stigmatization as she lives positively after being infected with HIV for about thirty years and the late Nobel prize laureate on her valiant struggle for environmental conservation despite the insurmountable odds. On the whole since Africa has a rich reservoir of oral narratives it must be used a methodology in formulating the reconstruction Theology?<sup>17</sup> This will rescue the reconstruction Theology from being an elitist Theology to a theology that will be relevant and appropriate to the reconstruction Theology literal hermeneutics while is useful in other context and situation is not the Panacea that is used to interpret all Biblical texts and hymns. Elewani Bethuel Fansance is critical of Mugambi hermeneutics methodology of both hymns and Bible. He aptly observes that, “Mugambi uses these hymns in the same way he uses Biblical texts, namely in a literal way, without addressing the context

<sup>14</sup> See Ka Mana, *Christians and Churches of Africa envisioning the future : Salvation in Jesus Christ and the building of a new African Society* (Oxford : Regum Books, 2002), pg 90-91

<sup>15</sup> Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A definition* (London : S C M Press, 1973), 84

<sup>16</sup> J N K Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction; African Christian Theology After the Cold War* ( Nairobi, Kenya: EAEP, 1995)P15-18.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

out of which they emerge.”<sup>18</sup> The truth is that interpretation must be cognizant and conscious of the three worlds of hermeneutics for it to be effective. Firstly, the text world that is the reality of the text and what it says which is derived from clear exegesis of the text. Secondly, the author’s world that is conscious of the historical settings of the text so that we deduce the set to life situation in the Biblical text. There is also need to look into the audience world this is contemporary world. These three worlds are blended in an interpretation that is Biblically sound, historically verified and contemporary relevant.

The challenge with reconstruction hermeneutics is that they sought only to be relevant to the audience world. They interpreted the Bible to fit the contemporary need especially with the Ezra- Nehemiah narrative to be the basis of reconstruction Theology. The challenges are that this interpretation fails to take seriously the life situation in the author’s world and the reality of the text world. Hence the interpretation can be used a proof text to justify reconstruction theology without a proper Exegesis on the text and desire organic meaning from the text so as to blend it to the audience world. The direct and literal correlation of Nehemiah- Ezra and the 1990’s situation in Africa cannot be analogous but rather has some similarities. Therefore, the reconstruction Theology hermeneutics should try to bridge the gap of time, history and culture between the two times in order to bring an authentic interpretation rather than the interpolation of scripture that the reconstruction theologian does unwittingly unconsciously in order to fit Biblical texts of Ezra and Nehemiah to the reconstruction Theology.

While the reconstruction Theology desires to move from theory to practical. It seeks to go from rhetoric to the practical. Reconstruction Theology though seem to be pragmatic does not clearly give African grown solutions to lifestyle diseases, family planning, the sporadic and incessant conflicts, African Justice and retribution. In fact, since the establishment of the reconstruction Theology in the 1990’s, there are more contemporary challenges and in Africa than before. The Rwandese genocide the rise of xenophobia, the implosion of brain drain, the proliferation rape and sexual violence in African conflicts and the massive exodus of the African to the Diaspora and the mega corruptions in Africa and rise of African home grown terrorism like the Al shabbab and Boko Haram. This is an indictment to Reconstruction Theology that its diagnosis, methodology and presumptions of African problems and the antidote by reconstruction is not working. This calls for the destruction and reconstruction of Jesse Mugambi’s

reconstruction Theology to be integrated with contextualized Theology, liberation Theology, Feminist Theology and Biblical and systematic Theology into a cohesive and coherent until that will be known as African Theology. This is necessitated by the fact that Reconstruction Theology does not acknowledge nor address the multifaceted challenges of the African Church conclusively without reference to other African theological formulations. Prof Jimmi Zacka in his incisive article entitled the Tasks of a Theologian in Africa Today. He identifies four critical challenges which are abundantly evident in the contemporary African church. Firstly, the inconsistency between the Christian teaching and practice, that has been necessitated by the Christian faith that has remained largely alien in spite of the proliferation of the numbers of the Christian.<sup>19</sup> Tubunkoh Adayemo points out that the church in Africa is, “a smile wide and an inch deep”.<sup>20</sup> Zack gives a diagnosis of the problem and prescribes the remedy as a relevant African Theology is needed to establish continuity between African traditional life and the Christian faith. This is the first task of an African Theology that is not firmly established nor addressed by the reconstruction theologians. This task of the African task was not cancelled by the coming down of the Berlin wall nor the end of the cold war. The reconstruction Theology must be seized on this fact of African Theology.

The second task of the African Theologian is to seek to reconstruct Africa from its incessant and perennial problems. The African continent is dederilled by social-political, economic and religious chaos. The reconstruction theology has set the deal with this task. The modus operandi of reconstruction theology is the superficial dealing of the problem systems like giving family planning gadgets and planting of traditional food e.t.c to deal with the perennial food shortages and hunger. The real problem is however, on tribalism and corruption that reconstruction Theology buries its head in sand without addressing it. Most of the problems in Africa are manmade and we cannot attempt to give the solutions without dealing with root cause of the problem. There is also need to acknowledge that the place for liberation Theology is not extinct in Africa as Mugambi vainly suggests with the title of the book from liberation of reconstruction. It is naïve to assume that with the end of colonialism, apartheid and with the new world all vices and evil will cease. This utopian concept has not been sustainable in fact after 1990 the untold miseries of Africans have been compounded with the Rwandese genocide, the collapse of Somalia, civil wars in Chad, Zaire (D.R.C), Central African Republic, the rise of

<sup>18</sup> Elewani Bethuel Fansani, *“The use of Ezra- Nehemiah in a quest for a theology of renewal, transformation and reconstruction( unpublished phd Thesis : university of Natal, 2002), 100*

<sup>19</sup> Jimmi Zacka, *Tasks of a Theologian in Africa Today*, <https://www.linkedin.com> retrived on 25 March 2017 at 15:30 GMT.

<sup>20</sup> Tukunboh Adayemo, *Salvation in African Tradition*, (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 8.

Muslim extremists and interreligious conflicts and terrorism. This has compounded the challenges of Africa and has firmly established the rationale for liberation Theology. The reconstruction Theology anti dotes for championing for human rights is too fickle for its impact will be peripheral. There is need for liberation. Theology to always deal with issues of political emasculation, economic sabotage and repressive regimes for reconstruction Theology does not offer a very robust challenge to the political status quo. Corruption, oppression and economic sabotage were not only part of the colonial government, but also part of the African independent government if not worst. Hence there will always be need for liberation Theology in African contrary to the assertion of reconstruction Theologians.

The third challenge that the African church will have contend with conservation, transformation and renewal of both the spiritual and physical life of the people is the key to the Reform agenda.<sup>21</sup> It is abundantly clear that Africa is depicted as, “sick, starved, bleeding and crippled”.<sup>22</sup> This is where the proponents of are very relevant to the contemporary church and must be indebted to them. Their approach to the solution to this African problem manifests creative thinking outside the box for it seeks a multi-disciplinary approach involving social scientists, philosophers, creative writers and artists, biological and physical scientists.<sup>23</sup> It is true that it will solve some of the external problems but the challenge with this approach is that some of the root problem that includes endemic corruption will not be addressed by this approach. Whereas the truth is that Africa has never lacked in good research and clear blue prints of dealing with its incessant challenges there remain an intractable problems. The problems lie in the implementation by inept government and kleptomaniac regimes that reconstruction Theology does not clearly deal with in its presentation. This in my considered opinion informed the more balanced approach of Theology that Prof. Jesse Mugambi engages in his latest book *Christian Theology and social transformation*. It is more realistic than his earlier Theological presentation for it incorporates other elements to African Theology that includes the elements of culture and political Theology a nuanced shifted from his earlier presentation that emphasized discontinuity from other theologies. The more fundamental challenge is that this transformation that reconstruction Theology envisage does not include the spiritual transformation

necessitated by regeneration and inside transformation that should precede the outside change. The reconstruction Theology must avoid the mechanical dealing with real issues as the proponents of prosperity gospel have always approached various issues with simplistic solutions. The reconstruction theology does not clearly enunciate and define coherently the relationship between it and other related disciples. Consequently, it does not demonstrate how the scope and relation between Theology and other field.

It is not very clear weather Theology will take charge or will be an optional extra with the other disciples taking charge. Theology must take lead of the agenda of social transformation and only adding the expertise of other fields to buttress its solutions.

The fourth challenge is that the African church is finding its self in a pluralistic society despite the Christian church enjoying a predominant position.<sup>24</sup> There is a lacuna in that reconstruction Theology does not address this phenomenon and it should be formulating the reconstruction mission from hostility, conflict and retaliation that was evident in Central African Republic and Nigeria. There is need for reconstruction in our Christian approach to other religion that includes tolerance, dialogue and if need self defense. This is the reality of inter religious encounter that we need to anticipate if we delve into the contemporary challenges of the church in Africa.

#### IV. Conclusion and application

In the conclusion, I will examine the challenges of reconstruction theology and offer alternative views and personal application. I do concur with Musa Dube in his very incisive criticism of reconstruction Theology is both apt and incisive as “naively responded joyfully to the collapse of Berlin wall and saw globalization as ushering in a new time, a fair time, where we can walk, act, see and think freely”. Dubes contention was that that this euphoria for the post Berlin wall was based on a déjà vu feeling not on substance. Consequently the, “theology of reconstruction is founded on sand as long as it does not address major oppressive issues of both globalization and patriarchy”.<sup>25</sup> With the benefit of hindsight we must state that the critic of Musa Dube was spot on. This has been vindicated by the Brexit and the election of the Maverick anti globalization United States president Donald Trump who stood on an anti globalization Campaign. The structures of colonialism and oppression were part of the globalization. These forms of oppression and economic colonialism did not end with the fall of Berlin wall, in fact it was exacerbated. The global debts on the third world countries due to ineptitude, corruption and incompetency of African leaders were not addressed by the reconstruction Theology. The complete distinction

<sup>21</sup> Jesse .K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi, Kenya : Action Publishers, 2003) pg 53

<sup>22</sup> Mary Ndetui and Emmanuel A Obeng, Eds, *Theology Of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essay* (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1999), p 262.

<sup>23</sup> Jesse Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction African Christian Theology after the Cold war*(Nairobi Educational Publishers 1995) p 140

<sup>24</sup> Zacka, *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> Gathogo, *Ibid*.

of the Ezra- Nehemiah and Moses and Joshua models is the naivety of reconstruction Theology. Liberation Theology will always have a place in Africa because of a myriad of challenges that it is grappling with Paul Gifford clearly observes the correlation between the political subjugation and the contemporary social problems. He observes that, “surely poverty, ill-health and precarious security of so many Kenyans is not unrelated the well documented plundering of the country’s resources by an irresponsible political elite.”<sup>26</sup> It is clearly evident that the assertion of a paradigm shift from liberation to reconstruction but the reconstruction Theologians is not sustainable neither is it feasible. In Africa reconstruction Theology has to be imbedded with liberation Theology for it to be pragmatic and to address the real challenges of the African Theology. In fact I find that reconstruction Theology is very cosmetic and romantic it seeks for solutions and in essence treats the symptoms without dealing with the real problems of corruption, poverty, marginalization that are evident in Africa.

The self-construction of is evident in its chief protagonist Jesse Mugambi who distinguishes liberation Theology and reconstruction Theology. The former according to Mugambi blames while reconstruction Theology does not blame rather it seeks solutions. This is not true because Mugambi in his classic master piece *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction* affirms that Africa has suffered after colonialism, from institutional racism and ideological manipulation during cold war and economic strangulation”.<sup>27</sup> The West and Breton Wood institutions have deliberately and systematically exploited Africa and he includes that globalization is another ploy to dominate Africa.<sup>28</sup> This blurs the distinction between liberation and reconstruction Theology rendering the dichotomy as superfluous and unnecessary.

The Euphoria and Utopia of globalization as a panacea of ushering a new dispensation in Africa may not have been true. As Emmanuel .M. Katongole observed that Mugambi had uncritical optimism towards the new world order.<sup>29</sup> In May 2006, the center of Ethics of Catholic University of East Africa held a three day conference on Africa, Globalization and Justice’ which drew participants from university from across East Africa. Their papers and presentations concurred on the fact that globalization was seen as the latest of the evil inflicted on

Africa and was to be rejected. This was in stark contrast the minister of trade and industry who affirmed that globalization was a fact of life that Africans to make the most out of it.<sup>30</sup> The truth that reconstruction Theology is that globalization is a contemporary reality that cannot be ignored. However, it should never be thought to be a remedy for all ills that will cure the problems that bedevil Africa. Hence the celebration of the proponents of reconstruction Theology was premature and their victory was Pyrrhic victory that was not sustainable.

The African construction Theology as we have observed did not take seriously liberation Theology. It does not address the real problems and issues that were raised by liberation Theology. Hence its out look to African problems and issues is superficial and therefore cannot stand alone to address the contemporary African political, social and economic problem without being augmented and fortified with liberation theology.

The solutions that reconstruction Theology seeks to offer on contemporary challenges like HIV/AIDS, population growth, drug addiction. There modes of addressing these challenges are not crystal clear and they are Western oriented without taking into consideration of the African culture. As Kenyandago states categorically that, “There is no way a people can develop without using and building on its culture. Borrowing can be done on condition that it does not tamper with the unique identity of one who is developing. In case for Africa, it is not difficult to see the difficulties that have come mainly trying to impose solutions which are strange to the culture and history of its people, especially, in the economic, political and religious fields”.<sup>31</sup>

The reconstruction Theology must be able to grapple with culture as the mode which reconstruction must take place hence this theological formulation must of necessity be conjoined with the African enculturation or contextualization Theology if it has to make sense and correctly address the African challenges.

Reconstruction Theology must not romanticize African culture neither must it denigrate African culture on the issue of food security the reconstruct. Theology should advocate for traditional foods that were more drought resistance. The same should be consumed to avoid the life style diseases that are prevalent in Africa. The same culture should be repudiated on “Widow Inheritance” that has contributed to the proliferation of H.I.V and Aids. The reconstruction Theology must be conscious of the fact that culture is dynamic and that there is an element that culture is reformulated and reinterpreted in light of the contemporary reality of the implosion of Western

<sup>26</sup> Paul Gifford, *Africa’s enculturation Theology: observations of an outsider*  
<https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/Africasincultu>.Retrived on 15 April at 1230GMT.

<sup>27</sup> Jesse Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*, (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), p127,145.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 163-164.

<sup>29</sup> Emmanuel .M. Katongole, *A future for Africa: Critical Essay in Christian Social Imagination* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2005), 169.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Gifford, *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Kenyandago, *“Rich but rendered poor: A Christian Response to the Paradox of poverty in Africa in Kenyandago (ed). The cries of the poor in Africa: Questions and Responses for African Christianity* (Kisubi: Marimum publishing, 2002), P47-49.



culture. Hence even the enculturation Theology needs to be reconstructed based on the present reality so that African culture is neither romanticized nor denigrated. What is good should be incorporated into Christianity and what is evil should be rejected total.

Reconstruction Theology is a step in the right direction. It seeks to address contemporary realities in view of globalization and the contemporary realities. The reconstruction Theology must be lauded for seeking to have a paradigm shift in dealing with the current reality. It seeks to avoid the dependency syndrome that is at the core of liberation theology that renders the Africa as a victim and a totally oppressed person forever. It addresses real issues of H.IV/AIDS, lifestyle diseases and global warming and environment issues. In this sense we must commend the reconstruction Theology for being relevant to contemporary African challenges.

The Lacuna with the reconstruction Theology is that it does not have a real exegetical and hermeneutical framework of dealing with the issues it seeks to address. Apart from the apparent mentors of Ezra and Nehemiah as the model of reconstruction Theology, the proponents of reconstruction theology have not done any serious Exegesis of the Biblical texts to warrant our attention. Hence there casual mention of scripture and their lack of coherent and systematic Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics with their lack of Biblical Theology foundation of their position is an authentication of the fact that reconstruction theology foundation or basis is not on solid scriptural issues but rather its foundation is a response to contemporary issues and historical dispensation. This exalts the historical issues at the expense of the Bible that should set the agenda. It is a theology from below which needs to be buttressed by a theology from above. Reconstruction Theology needs to be based on solid Biblical foundation and sound Biblical Exegesis.

The reconstruction Theology does not deal with the human condition of total depravity that is both inborn inclination and propensity to sin and the external acts of sin. This is the fundamental problem of humanity. It is very idealistic and naïve to think that once the systems are challenges, the infrastructure of the country is improved, the environment is conserved, HIV/AIDS is addressed then all the problems will be tackled. Reconstruction Theology looks at the symptoms but not the real problems of humanity which is sin it is not a conceptual frame work change that will be the magic bullet that will cure all the human ills. The reconstruction theology if it has to address the Theology from within needs to have a salvation Theology at its core. This is not to imply an over spiritualization of issues but with salvation there will always be a change of perspective on how issues are addressed.

Reconstruction Theology only deludes into systemic evil

that can be addressed by advocacy and human rights. It is conspicuous silent on both personal evil and cosmological evil. The established or missionary initiated churches have always dealt with this form of evil the advocacy of social justice. This was evident in the fight for multi party system of Kenya that was led by Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian Bishops and Clergy. The truth is that even with the advent of multi party and a new political dispensation was not prophylactic against the personal evil. This person evil is still evident even with the change of the constitution. There is a personal evil that is brought by personal acts of commission and omissions that ought to be dealt with by salvation. This is where the evangelicals do evil well in expounding the teaching of conversation and renouncing of old ways. There is also cosmological evil that requires spiritual warfare. This is the strong suits of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches. This Theology of reconstruction does not holistically address the challenge of evil from all dimensions. It is true that it seeks to address systemic evil. The Theology abysmally fails to address the personal evil and soteriology and it doesn't have an elaborate doctrine of demonology or cosmic evil which is a challenge in Africa. This reconstruction Theology addresses African problem from a very Western perspective. As a result it will come with very superficial solution to real problem of evil. The African concept of dealing with evil should be integrated in this reconstruction Theology.

Reconstruction Theology does not purport nor has it systematically dealt with all the theological issues. The doctrine of Ecclesiology and how it fits to the entire frame work of reconstruction Theology is completely absent. The church and the state are two distinct institutions created by God to perform two distinct functions. The church and the state are the two distinct institutions created by God to perform two distinct functions. The church purpose of existence is to do evangelism, edification and social action. It is to preach the gospel as a scattered community to the entire world in obedience of the great commission. It is also called to be a gathering community where edification and pastoral care is offered. The church also exists for social action, (Matthew 28:19-20, Eph 4:11-13 and Ephesians 2:10). The state on the other hand exist to maintain law and order, to punish offenders and to provide services for the population, (Romans 13:1-6 and 1 Peter 2:13-14).The proponents of reconstruction should embrace the African Church as an agent of social transformation and change and being and should champion for human Rights, fight for equal distribution of land, speak against dictatorship and corruption the church should be vehicle for implementing or advocating for the reconstruction of Africa since the majority of the Africans are Christians. The African Church must do both the great commission

and the Cultural mandate to alleviate hunger, combat disease, fight terrorism and extremity, champion for human rights, stand against tribalism and corruption. A research paper of this magnitude without practical and personal application will be an exercise in futility. As an Anglican priest and a Christian, I have learned to personally integrate stories in my sermon so as to be relevant to the African context and situation. It has become abundantly clear to me that I need to do both the great commission and the cultural mandate and be an agent of Gods Kingdom by my word and deed as a Christians by doing both my spiritual and civil duties without minimizing or subordinating either my duty. As Church leader my resolve to make the Church an agent of social transformation have been revamped and emboldened we have engaged in more evangelistic missions after the study in fact three to be more precise in the most dreaded slums of Kapenguria of Mathare and Arap Maget. In the public forums I have vociferously championed for the marginalized and spoke against corruption and I have realized that if the Church is empowered and with focused leadership she will be the salt and the light of the world and an embodiment and champion of a reconstructed, Reconstruction Theology that will be synergized with inculturation Theology and liberation and hence be authentically Biblical and relevant to the African context and situation.

## References

- Bujo, Benezet. *Africa Theology in Social Context*, trans J O Donohue. Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1992.
- Chipanda, J.B Karamanga, , J.N.K Mugambi and Omari C.K leds. *The church of Africa: Towards A Theology of Reconstruction*: Nairobi: AACC, 1991.
- Fansani, Elewani Bethuel. *The use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for a Theology of Renewal, Transformation and Reconstruction*, a PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Natal, 2002.
- Gathogo, Julius. *Jesse Mugambi Pedigree: Formative Factors. School of Religion and Theology*: University of Kwazulu Natal. Uir. Unisa. Ac. Za Retrieved on 19 May 2017 at 1340 GMT.
- Getui, Mary and Emmanuel A Obeng, eds. *Theology of Reconstruction*: Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 1999.
- Gifford, Paul. *African enculturation Theology: Observations of an outsider* [https://eprints. Soas. Ac.uk](https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/African%20incult)> African incult Retrieved on 15<sup>th</sup> April at 1230 GMT.
- Idowu, Bolaji. *African Traditional Religion: A definition*. London SCM, 1973.
- Katongole, Emmanuel M. *A future for Africa: Critical Essay in Christian Social Imagination* Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2005.

- Kenyandago, Peter, eds. *The cries of the poor in Africa*. Kisubi: Marimum Publishing, 2002.
- Kuria, David. *The Reconstruction of Africa by Theologians*. Web. Peace link. It retrieved on 22 February 2017 at 1933 GMT.
- Mana, See Ka. *Christians and Churches of Africa Envisioning the Future: Salvation in Jesus Christ and Building of a New Society*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 2002.
- Mugambi, Jesse. *From Liberation to Reconstruction: Africa Christian Theology after the Cold War*: Nairobi. EAEP, 1995
- Mugambi, Jesse. *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*. Nairobi, Kenya: Action Publishers, 2003.
- Shah, Anup. *Conflicts in Africa*. [www.global.issues](http://www.global.issues) retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 1532 GMT.
- Scheilter, Robert J. *The New Catholicity Theology between the global and the local*. Mark Knoll, New York: Orbis Publishers.
- Quenum, Jean Marie Hycacinthe. *A Responsible Reconstruction Theology for Today's Africa* [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) retrieved on 26 March 2017 at 14:28GMT.
- Zacka, Jimmi, *Tasks of a Theologian in Africa Today*. <https://www.linkedin.com> retrieved on 25 March 2017 at 15:30 GMT.

## Author Appreciation

My journey in scholarship would not have been possible without the help and support of my parents; William and Joan Chesosi, my siblings Alex, Carolyn, Dan and Emmy, my wife Rev Lydia Chesosi, my children; Hazel, Emmy and Alex Chesosi. My sister in laws Colleta and Jacky, My nieces and nephews Joan, Chebet, Chemutai, Cheptoo and Carl Chesosi. I appreciate the Christians of Kipsikirok, Good Shepherd Kibomet, Tot Missionary Area, the greater St John's Kiminini Parish, St Mark's Kesegon Parish, St. Andrews Kapenguria Parish, my students at St. Paul's Theological College, Kapsabet and Imanuel Nasokol Parish, not forgetting Apois: Peter, Job and Noah Nyorsok, Steve Tumkou for supporting my preaching, writing and teaching ministry, and Rebecca Losiwa and Francisca Lotam for the technical assistance in typing these articles.