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AN INCARNATIONAL MISSION OF MERCY: A HERMENEUTICAL AND
PRAXIS-BASED CRITERION FOR SOCIAL RECONCILIATION

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ABSTRACT

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Uganda's fragmented ethnic reality comprises the reconstruction of ethnic identities into rival categories of *difference* and *otherness*. From a historical perspective, under the 'divide and rule' British colonial policy, colonial anthropology, political, and economic systems polarized and mobilized native nations into oppositional and competing configurations of *embodied otherness*. The resultant antagonistic social ethos, ingrained in the consciousness of persons and groups, foments a legacy of sociopolitical oppression and economic alienation and instigates religious and spiritual fragmentation within the body of Christ. From a Christian perspective, this project proposes an incarnational mission of mercy centered on the *event of encounter* as a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion toward social reconciliation. It offers a way of interpreting conflicted reality by transforming ethnic attitudes, social structures, practices, and new habits of relation among persons of different ethnic groups and institutions. Based on Christian values, human agency, and God's grace, it envisions transformed human relations and the establishment of a renewed social fabric. Christian faith, hope, and love lived out in a concrete praxis of mercy inspire this proposed new way of being, relation, and practice so that Uganda may become a reconciling society that anticipates an eschatological communion in God's Kingdom.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This project proposes an incarnational mission of mercy centered on the *event of encounter* as a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion toward social reconciliation. It offers a way of interpreting conflicted reality by transforming ethnic attitudes, social structures, practices, and new habits of relation among persons of different ethnic groups and institutions. Based on Christian values, human agency, and God's grace, it envisions transformed human relations and the establishment of a renewed social fabric. Christian faith, hope, and love lived out in a concrete praxis of mercy inspire this proposed new way of being, relation, and practice so that Uganda may become a reconciling society that anticipates an eschatological communion in God's Kingdom.

Locating the Problem of Ethnic Fragmentation in Uganda's Historical Reality

Uganda's fragmented ethnic reality comprises the reconstruction of ethnic identities into rival categories of *difference* and *otherness*. From a historical perspective, under the 'divide and rule' British colonial policy, colonial anthropology, political, and economic systems polarized and mobilized native nations into oppositional and competing configurations of *embodied otherness*. Ethnic distinction acquired negative meaning and forms of association in Uganda's new colonial political entity. Ethnicity became a phenomenon of differentiation that defined political and economic privilege or lack thereof. After independence, the colonial legacy gave rise to exclusionary ethnic political regimes in which ethnicity was co-opted in political and economic competition, access to power, and oppression of the 'other.' New regimes essentialized ethnic diversity; they sought to dehumanize and exclude or even eliminate the ethnic *other*. As a result, ethnic distinction took on wide-ranging implications in sociopolitical and economic reality and cultural and religious realms of the new colonial political entity.

With such an antagonistic social ethos engrained in the consciousness of persons and groups, ethnic difference has anthropological and theological implications for religious

institutions. It constitutes the deconstruction of the *imago Dei* into categories inimical to the communion demanded of Christian faith and practice. Christians have often succumbed to the negative ethnic ideology promoting its narratives, discourses, and representations, thus contributing to the production of ethnic divisions. Narrow ethnic enclaves that insulate Christians from persons of other ethnic groups who profess the same faith tradition have emerged, dividing ecclesial communities along ethnic lines.

Since ethnic fragmentation is a multifaceted phenomenon comprising different dimensions of human experience ranging from the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural to the socioreligious, it requires a multidimensional approach. All persons and institutions should collectively forge ways to engage the reality of the *other* with a commitment to transform injustices that affect human flourishing, particularly among the victims of oppression. This project asks: In such a conflicted reality, how does Christian faith shape *who* the disciple becomes, *how* she relates to the *other*, and *what* she ought to do to transform social structures of injustice? That threefold question generates the central thesis of the dissertation.

The Thesis of the Dissertation

To respond to the multifaceted problem, this dissertation argues that social reconciliation requires an incarnation mission of mercy centered on the event of encounter as a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion for overcoming ethnic fragmentation. This precisely means social reconciliation becomes a historical process by which persons, communities, and institutions actively and practically draw near the *other* to engage in processes and events that help interpret and transform the conflicted reality. This implies, first and foremost, drawing near to victims in solidarity with them, fighting to foster justice, and offering them hope. Second, it demands engaging the oppressors to engender forgiveness and conversion while simultaneously seeking to establish mutual trust and cooperation with the ethnic other. Although the process of social

reconciliation requires human agency, it depends on God's grace. It anticipates, though imperfectly, the eschatological communion in the Kingdom of God. In this sense, an incarnational mission of mercy aims to eradicate oppression, alienation, exclusion, and otherness to establish cooperation, mutual trust, and acceptance. As will be shown, my understanding of incarnational mercy, that is, the willingness to enter and engage the reality of the other, extends beyond the condition of the victim, its primary recipient. It includes the oppressor and the alienated ethnic *other*. In this sense, mercy as a specific expression of God's love demands an all-embracing approach that even offers perpetrators opportunities for repentance and conversion.

The event of the Incarnation in the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth undergirds the incarnational mission for mercy. It provides a pattern of being, relation, and practice to persons, institutions, and communities to develop new attitudes, ways of relating, and acting toward one another. It seeks to build a renewed social fabric based on solidarity, justice, forgiveness, conversion, mutual trust, and cooperation. While anticipating an eschatological fulfillment of reconciliation in God's Kingdom, this project recognizes the significance of the temporary task guided by God's grace through human agency. The incarnational mission of mercy attempts to express that transcendental reality within the historical, the work of grace through human action, and spirituality through a Christian praxis.

Methodological Approach

The methodology of this dissertation tries to merge Christian faith confession in the love of God and human lived experience. I primarily base my approach on Jon Sobrino's spirituality of liberation. Sobrino's threefold dispositions of his spirituality: honesty with reality, faithfulness to reality, and being led by the more of reality offer a specific orientation to my approach. This framework helps provide a holistic faith experience that articulates Christian love in terms of *mercy*. Sobrino defines the *principle of mercy* as "a specific love, which while standing at the

origin of a process, also remains present and active throughout the process, endowing it with a particular direction and shaping the various elements that compose it."[1] I expand Sobrino's notion of mercy to demonstrate that mercy is a divine attribute. God's engagement with the condition of victims offers a pattern for the people God to take a similar turn toward the most vulnerable. Moreover, God does not abandon the oppressor; God demands repentance and conversion of the offenders. In the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, God's mercy become incarnate, particularly in the condition of the poor. In the following of Jesus, Christian faith demands engagement with conflicted historical reality starting with the transformation of the condition of victims. The practice of mercy has a humanizing potential insofar as it seeks to restore the *imago Dei* in the dehumanized victim and the dehumanizing oppressor. It also requires the transformation of social structures that undergird oppression. Mercy should be practiced as a personal and public virtue. Hence, it helps bring God's people close to one another, establishing relations based on Christian values of faith, hope, and love in anticipation of a reconciling society. Concretely, incarnational mercy should be manifested in the *event of encounter* as a pastoral praxis that seeks to establish mutual experiences of closeness to persons and communities, change attitudes, and transform social structures of injustice.

Overview of Chapters

This project consists of five chapters. The *first chapter* presents the main problem of the dissertation, that is, ethnic fragmentation in its multifaceted dimensions. It traces the contemporary situation vis-à-vis the legacy of British colonial ideology as its precursor. Examining the country's historical reality from a Christian perspective provides a theological and moral challenge. The negative construal of human identity that hostile ethnic ideology espouses is a systemic evil that

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[1] Jon Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 16.

distorts the *imago Dei* and seeks to destroy the unity of the body of Christ. A conflicted society creates victims and alienates both victim and perpetrator from their true humanity in different ways. Hence, ethnic fragmentation is 'embodied' historicity in persons and communities.

The *second chapter* establishes a Christian social ethic that seeks the transformation of attitudes, practices, and social structures that alienate the 'other.' It precisely fosters the formation of persons and communities as disciples of Jesus to confront ethnic *differentiation* and to transform social structures in order assuage the suffering of victims of exclusion, resentment, and hostility. In practice, the Christian ethic I propose suggests processes that facilitate memory reconstruction, rebuilding identity, and promoting justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. As chapters four and five suggest, these processes are concrete expressions of the incarnational mission of mercy centered on the *event of an encounter*. The ethic aims to counter the hostile ethos of ethnic fragmentation by suggesting new modes of relation in which mutual trust and respect, co-existence, and acceptance can begin to emerge. Founded on a literal and theological reading of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48), this ethic provides a new orientation and transformation of practices in following Jesus. In a sense, this ethic offers a threefold orientation to the disciple; *who* she ought to be, *how* she should relate to the *other,* and *what* she does to transform social structures.

The *third chapter* focuses on a spirituality of reconciliation that undergirds the Christian social ethic chapter two demonstrates. Building on Jon Sobrino's *principle of mercy,* this spirituality articulates love in terms of *mercy*. Mercy offers a willingness to enter into the reality of the other. It express a specific form of love; it is the first and last of all human dispositions and reactions toward suffering humanity.[2] Moreover, mercy is a divine attribute that reflects authentic

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[2] Ibid.

discipleship and likeness to God toward victims of history. In anthropological terms, mercy is a humanizing virtue that defines and seeks to restore what it means to be truly human for the subject, victim, and the *other*.[3] Its praxis, particularly as an event of encounter, grounds mercy in pastoral arrangements that seek to bring persons and communities of different ethnicities into one ecclesial communion.

The fourth chapter establishes the thesis of the dissertation, an incarnational mission of mercy centered on the *event of encounter* as a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion toward a Christian model of social reconciliation. Incarnational mercy comprises the willingness to draw near to the *other* to transform their reality and the social structures that undergird it. Incarnational mercy seeks to provide persons, institutions, and communities with new attitudes and ways of relating and acting toward one another. Mercy is a fundamental aspect of making present the Kingdom of God in conflicted history, starting with victims of oppression.

The main focus of the *fifth chapter* is to offer a pastoral response to the three-fold problem chapter one raised, namely, ethnic fragmentation in its sociopolitical, economic, and religious dimensions. I propose the 'event of *encounter*' as a pastoral praxis that actualizes the incarnational mission of mercy. Encounter involves presence, conversations, and collaborations among persons within the church and society. The pastoral praxis aims to shape new reconciling attitudes, identities, and arrangements and ultimately seek a shared journey. Encounter has a dual orientation, that is, it aims to foster communion within the church (*ad intra*) and engage institutions beyond the church (*ad extra*). It defines the church's mission and offers an invitation to society in such a way that the event of *encounter* provides a holistic way of confronting problems of alienation, exclusion, and divisions and shaping new reconciling identities and practices. As the

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[3] Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 63.

primary audience of this project, the religious, laity, and clergy ought to take a prophetic stance against all forms of exclusion, alienation, and oppression. Living Christ's threefold ministry of priest, king, and prophet should inspire all Christians to engage in conflicted reality in ways that foster their conversion and reconciliation.

This project proposes a holistic approach to social reconciliation that involves processes, events, and practices that span generations. Reconciliation thus demands the ongoing engagement of all persons, institutions, and groups to form a reconciling culture. This human endeavor should awaken a consciousness that reconciliation is shaped and directed by God's grace in anticipation of eschatological communion in God's Kingdom. The temporal task, however, provides ways for Christin people to be 'salt of the earth and light of the world, so that society may make present the reconciling values of God's Kingdom in concrete historical reality.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL AND SOCIOPOLITICAL REALITY: THE CHALLENGE OF FRAGMENTATION IN COLONIAL AND CONTEMPORARY UGANDA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one presents the dissertation's main problem; the challenge of fragmentation of Uganda's society along ethnic lines. Ethnic divisions manifested in the country's sociopolitical, economic, anthropological, and religious realities. A history of negative construal and reconstruction of native ethnic identities, shaping them into competing political and economic arrangements, set in motion the consequent ethnically motivated hostility, exclusion, and violence in contemporary society. As I will later emphasize, ethnic fragmentation is not only a sociopolitical and economic problem but also an anthropological and theological problem. From a Christian perspective, it destroys human relations and deeply divides the body of Christ among Christian communities into geographic, cultural, and linguistic enclaves. Christians often succumb to the dominant ethos that undergirds division, hate, nepotism, and violence against persons perceived as 'other.' Ethnic fragmentation accounts for the perpetuation of ethnically motivated exclusion, injustices, and cycles of retaliatory violence in the country's history, even when old regimes are toppled and new ones created.

From its historical and sociopolitical roots, as I will illustrate, ethnic fragmentation arises from exclusionary ethnic ideology – the discourses, narratives, and representations that negatively construct the identity of persons belonging to other ethnic groups as '*other*.' It sets persons of one group in opposition to others, simply because they are different. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate how the exclusionary ethnic ideology that developed in Uganda not only undergirds exclusion and hostility in the sociopolitical and economic order but also highlights its anthropological and theological dimensions that destroy human relations within communities. The

negative construal of other's identity undermines human relations and contradicts the Christian ethos of love and unity.

I further demonstrate that exclusionary ethnic ideology arises from *differentiation* or *othering,* a process that creates competing arrangements out of diversity. Moreover, ethnic ideology is not an abstract phenomenon; it substantially impacts human persons and social relations. The 'other' is a human person – an 'embodied difference' hated, excluded, and often eliminated in society. Ethnic ideology not only sets human persons in diametric opposition to others but also bears on how society is organized in the political and economic systems. The brunt of ethnic fragmentation is most felt by victims of exclusion, oppression, and ethnically motivated violence. In the next section, I show the historical precursor of ethnic ideology in the formation of Uganda as a nation during the British colonial rule.

SECTION I: BRITISH COLONIAL EXPERIENCE: CONSTRUCTS AND SYSTEMS

1.1 The Injustice of British Colonialism in the Creation of Uganda

The geopolitical entity called Uganda today did not naturally evolve out of its 56-constituent ethnic groups.[4] Instead, it is a product of the experience of the 'injustice of colonialism'[5] that officially began in 1894 with British political activity in this part of the East African Great Lakes region.[6] Colonialism was an injustice because it violated the rights of

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[4] Uganda National Bureau of Statistics 2002, "2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census: Analytical Report" (Uganda Bureua of Statistics, October 2006), 22, Website: www.ubos.org.

[5] Margaret Moore, "Justice and Colonialism," *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 8 (2016): 447–461. Moore describes the imperial political and economic project of colonialism as an injustice. Citing Daniel Butt and Kok-Chor Tan she outlines three violations of rights against the colonized: political domination, cultural imposition and exploitation. (*Cf Daniel* Butt, 'Colonialism and Post-colonialism.' *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics.* Ed. Hugh LaFolletee. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2013, 892-898; Kok-Chor Tan, 'Colonialism, Reparations and Global Justice.' *Reparations: Interdisciplinary Inquiries.* Eds. John Miller and Rahul Kumar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.280-306.

[6] The *African Great Lakes Region* is a geographical area constituting a series of lakes in and around the East African Rift Valley. It comprises of Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Albert, Lake Edward and Lake Malawi. Countries in this region include Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and

indigenous communities to sovereignty by incorporating them into the British imperial political and economic project. Without regard to their unique histories, languages, customs, and governance systems, the British merged ethnic groups into one state.[7] Before 1894 these groups had existed as independent native nations. Most of the people of each ethnic group had never been outside their geographic territory or even encountered a person of another group. In the creation of Uganda, however, as Apolo R. Nsibambi, a Ugandan political scientist asserts, these native nations found themselves *trapped* within a much larger artificially created state.[8] Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle reiterate Nsibambi's assertion that "Uganda was itself a British colonial creation." "Administratively," they continue, "it is an amalgam of several people occupying a particular section of the East African interior and following widely differing political practices at the time of the European colonial partition at the end of the nineteenth century."[9]

Nsibambi further stresses that "when the British colonized [the region we call] Uganda, it was not their intention to ensure that the different 'tribes'[*sic*] of Uganda were united for if they were united, they would have worked together to resist and overthrow British rule."[10] Nsibambi's assertion can be further verified by the colonial 'divide and rule' policy and other administrative mechanisms intended to create divisions among people. Later in the chapter, I analyze this policy and the impact of other British administrative methods on the subsequent post-independence era.

However, Gardner Thompson, a political scientist challenges Nsibambi's assertion that native nations were merely 'trapped' in an artificially created geopolitical entity. For Thompson,

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Uganda. *Cf* "African Great Lakes," *Wikipedia*, June 20, 2020, accessed June 22, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.

[7] Peter Musoke Gukiina, *Uganda: A Case Study in African Political Development* (Notre Dame [Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 14.

[8] Apolo Robin Nsibambi, *National Integration in Uganda 1962 - 2013* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2014), 9.

[9] Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle, eds., *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), 5.

[10] Nsibambi, *National Integration in Uganda 1962 - 2013*, 2.

Ugandans "were not passive observers of their [own] fate." He maintains that "every dimension and detail in the emergent relationship between 'ruler' and 'ruled' had to be forged and crystallized through the human agency of the colonized and the colonizers."[11] Thompson's observation is indisputable, as stated. However, the extent to which colonized people willingly acquiesced to British rule is disputable. Faced with the overwhelming power of a foreign invader, the colonized people found themselves in a compromising position. For their survival, native peoples made certain concessions to the British; they signed 'treaties' and 'collaborated.' Judith W. Kay puts it more succinctly that the relationship between colonizers and the local people was "competitive, uneasy, and coercively unequal."[12] This means that the colonizer had a dominant sway over the resultant arrangements. It is essential to elaborate on how these arrangements became effected.

1.1.1 Anthropological Constructs and Classifications: The Introduction of 'Tribe'

Under the British colonial rule, the native nations became not only coercively incorporated into a new geopolitical entity but also acquired new identity labels that eventually became internalized as inferiorized forms of self-description. Native nations *sui iuris* became dubbed '*tribes.*' Scholars in social sciences, particularly anthropology find the designation 'tribe' quite demeaning and controversial. According to Chris Lowe, the term "promotes misleading stereotypes."[13] Lowe and other scholars like Tunde Brimah, Pearl-Alice Marsh, William Minter, and Monde Muyangwa suggest several reasons that repudiate the use of 'tribe.' This term, according to them, is a western racial label of black African people that does not contribute to

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[11] Gardner Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and Its Legacy* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), 2.

[12] Judith W. Kay, "Middle Agents as Marginalized: How the Rwanda Genocide Challenges Ethics from the Margins," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 2 (2013): 23, accessed July 2, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23563093.

[13] Chris Lowe, "Talking about Tribe: Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis," *Africa Policy Information Center*, Ruth Brandon Papers (November 1997): 1.

understanding the realities of native nations or the conflicts attributed to them.[14] First, it has no corresponding linguistic expressions among African languages. For instance, Lowe illustrates that Zambia, a country slightly larger than the state of Texas (in the United States), has seventy-three (73) indigenous languages.[15] Among the variety of words in these languages that signify – nation, people, clan, village, or community, none of them deciphers 'tribe.'[16] To add to Lowe's argument, in my native language [*Luganda* in Uganda], the term does not have any equivalent inference – it is foreign to references either to persons or organization of communities of indigenous people. Second, according to Lowe, 'tribe' is used to promote a *myth* of primitive African timelessness, obscuring development and change. He insists that to live in a 'tribal state' implies existence in a simple fixed traditional condition. And that such condition of traditional conservatism that is close to nature and resists transformation and modernity, explains the prevalence of underdevelopment and poverty in Africa. Third, 'tribe' implies savagery, barbarity, and inherence to violence. Moreover, stereotypes of primitiveness and backwardness are also linked to imaginings of irrationality and superstition. Lowe and other scholars further argue that the combination of these ideas often locates violence and conflict in Africa to primordial, irrational, and unchangeable conditions linked to the conception of 'tribal communities' on the continent. Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher reflecting on the idea of tribe according to this Western view of African people, says "war is seen as all-pervasive" – people are engaged in rampant irrational self-destruction.[17] Again Lowe asserts that this label [tribe] feeds into and reinforces the western racist ideology that portrays Africans as inherently irrational, primitive, and violent.[18]

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 2.
[16] Ibid., 7.
[17] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*: Studies on the History of Society and Culture 41 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 8.
[18] Lowe, "Talking about Tribe: Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis," 3.

Fourth, 'tribe,' according to Lowe, does not follow any definitive conceptual framework; for instance, demographic considerations, economic or technological aspects of [un]development. It is somewhat arbitrary to designate, for example, the seven million *Baganda* (of Uganda) or nine million *Ibo* (of Nigeria) as 'tribes' but not the three million *Welsh* of Great Britain. The label 'tribe' is applied to the Zulu in South Africa, who are more numerous than the French Canadians, but not the latter.[19] Oddly still, 'tribe' is used for the Maasai herders, Kikuyu farmers, Kung hunter-gatherers of Botswana and Namibia, and members of these groups who live and work in business and entrepreneurial positions in metropolitan cities of Africa just like people in western countries.

If the term 'tribe' carried such meaning in the nineteenth century as it does today, it is logical to suggest that British colonialists deliberately intended to disparage black Africans and portray them in negative stereotyped representations. Today, the terms 'tribal' and 'African' in the Western media are almost synonymous. Aidan Campbell, a social anthropologist summarizes the meaning associated with 'tribe.' "In the West," he states, "African *tribalism* [emphasis added] has traditionally been seen as the epitome of primitive savagery. The expression conjures up images of ghastly mobs baying for blood, with heads cut off and stuck on poles. Even today, newspaper and television commentators have a list of African atrocities – Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia – ready to hand whenever they wish to illustrate barbarism."[20]

Aidan W. Southall too acknowledges how controversial the designation of 'tribe' is, stating that it presents considerable empirical difficulties in determining the distinguishing characteristics of what exactly consists of a 'tribal society.'[21] Southhall attempts to give a general definition of a tribal society as "a whole society with a high degree of self-sufficiency at a near subsistence level,

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[19] Ibid., 2.
[20] Aidan Campbell, *Western Primitivism: African Ethnicity: A Study of Cultural Relations* (London: Cassell, 1997), 1.
[21] Aidan W. Southall, "The Illusion of Tribe," *Journal of Asian and African Studies; Leiden* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1970): 28, accessed March 2, 2020, http://search.proquest.com/docview.

based on relatively simple technology without writing or literature, politically autonomous, and with its language, culture, sense of identity, and indigenous religion."[22] However, given the widespread incorporation into modern African states, it is difficult to determine the extent to which such native nations as Southall describes them still exist intact with their political autonomy. Although members of particular modern communities may have nostalgic imaginations of the ancient full existence of their native nations or be firmly attached to and influenced by the values of those societies, an element of reconstruction enters into their imagination.[23] Moreover, the processes of migration, assimilation, and miscegenation make it challenging to define a society as 'tribal' in a manner that fits Southall's description.

Furthermore, before the British arrival and conquest,[24] the people within the region of Uganda had been in contact with the outside world for centuries through trade.[25] Arab merchants, for example, came into this region with cotton materials, china, and glassware in exchange for ivory and other commodities. In addition, the coastal peoples of East Africa were in constant contact with the interior. The Sultan of Zanzibar, for instance, often sent envoys to make treaties and exchange gifts with the *Kabaka* (king) of Buganda.[26] The longstanding cultural exchange between East African peoples, the Middle East, and Asia challenges a conception of a closed African world before the arrival of Europeans. If Southall's definition of 'tribe' is conceivable, it does not fit the condition of the native nations of East Africa at the arrival of the British. Therefore, the British used 'tribe' as an anthropological construct with denigrating connotation. The label

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[22] Ibid., 28.

[23] Ibid., 29.

[24] The first British explorer Hannington Speke arrived in this region of East Africa in February 1862 in search of the source of the Nile River. He was later joined by Captain Grant in May the same year. British conquest did not begin until 1890. *See* Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to1900* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1972), 155-158, 220-236.

[25] Phares Mutibwa Mukasa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008), 2.

[26] M. S. M. Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of Kingdom to 1900* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1972), 158–60.

negatively affected human relations between the colonizer and the colonized and among the colonized themselves. Moreover, the language in which this term was couched was foreign (English). Native people merely adopted the term with its inferiorized meaning and used it to describe native nations, but never used it to describe the British colonialists.

Given its ambiguous and derogatory connotations, this project avoids the terms 'tribe' or 'tribalism,' except for clarification. Instead, I will use 'ethnic group' to imply – an indigenous community, native society, or nation, including modern people who identify themselves in such relations. As Thomas Eriksen says, "the term 'ethnic group' suggests contact and relationship."[27] In other words, one cannot speak of an ethnic group in isolation; it involves consciousness of group membership, triggered within a particular set of social conditions in contact with other groups. Furthermore, Eriksen asserts that "ethnicity emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters through people's ways of coping with the demands and challenges of life."[28] And because of this contact, I show later in the chapter that 'ethnic identity' is dynamic with a propensity to change. Social interaction is the locus where ethnic identity is re-created and reconstructed. That dynamic character of ethnic group identity is contrary to a sense of fixed, timeless, and localized state – confined to unchangeable tradition and isolation that a 'tribal' society portrays, and in which British colonial mentality tried to circumscribe native communities.

1.1.2 Ethnic and Linguistic Categories

Besides the 'tribe' label, and the merging of the 56 native communities into a new geopolitical project, the British colonial empire conferred new anthropological classifications with political implications. The British classified the different ethnic groups under two general

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[27] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition.., Anthropology, culture, and society (London ; New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 10.
[28] Ibid., 1.

linguistic clusters; 'Nilotic' and 'Bantu.' In contemporary Uganda the 'Nilotic' live north, while the 'Bantu' south of the Nile River.[29] As I will later demonstrate, this classification hurt the 'north-south' political divide.

Before British colonization in 1894, Bantu ethnic groups had established centralized states and bureaucratic state systems[30] under kings, hierarchies of chiefs, and laws.[31] Among the Bantu, were four main kingdoms – Buganda, Bunyoro, Nkore, and Toro. The interactions among these kingdoms were a mixture of friendly relationships maintained by treaties and at times, rivalries.[32] Contentions often involved clashes over dominance, expansion,[33] and control of resources and smaller communities. Frequently, smaller communities played off one powerful neighbor against another.[34] The Nilotic groups had different political structures; they generally lived in segmentary societies.[35] One ethnic group had several smaller political units comprising several clans, while the Bantu had larger and hierarchically structured kingdoms.[36] Among the Nilotic groups, especially the Luo, political organization rested on "consensus of elders representing different clans constituting a particular community," rather than decisions made by a single ruler.[37] The British merged these diverse people with dissimilar political organizations into arbitrarily drawn

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[29] Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press, Inc., 1992), 1.

[30] Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), 11.

[31] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 1.

[32] Chrispas Nyombi and Ronald Kaddu, "Ethnic Conflict in Uganda's Political History," *Social Science Research Network*, 1, last modified August 15, 2015, accessed October 7, 2019, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2645055.

[33] Mutibwa Mukasa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics*, xii.

[34] Michael Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda*, Eastern African Studies (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1993), 1-2.

[35] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 1. According to the *Oxford Reference* (www.oxfordreference.com), "Segmentary society" refers to "a social system comprising numerous relatively small autonomous groups who generally regulate their own affairs but who periodically come together to form larger groups and who, in some senses, may collectively appear to be a single large community."

[36] Phares Mutibwa Mukasa, *A History of Uganda: The First 100 Years 1894 - 1994* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2016), 68.

[37] Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 11.

national boundaries. In the next section, I will show how ethnic consciousness was triggered, mobilized, and constituted in political and economic competition and exclusion.

1.1.3 Ethnicity and its Reconstruction in Sociopolitical and Economic Systems

In this section, I analyze ethnicity as a concept and phenomenon and its reconstruction in the process of *differentiation* or *othering* to create competing sociopolitical and economic categories based on native diversity. This analysis will help understand how ethnic identity became entrenched as a commanding presence – a powerful political mechanism and mobilizing ideological tool at the center of Uganda's polity.[38]

Ethnicity or ethnic identity is a fluid concept and phenomenon with a propensity to change in different sociopolitical contexts. The term *ethnicity* evolved from the Greek etymology *ethnos*, derived from *ethnikos*. *Ethnos* originally meant heathen or pagan.[39] Its English form, 'ethnicity,' was used with the Greek connotation (i.e., heathen). It later came to came to refer to racial characteristics. After the Second World War, its derivative term 'ethnics' was used in the United States as "a polite way of referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of relatively British descent."[40] In modern times with emphasis on intergroup dynamics (accommodation, cooperation, competition, avoidance, compromise, interdependence,…), many anthropologists agree that the development of the notion of 'ethnicity' has to do with the classification of people and inter-group relations. Therefore, ethnic identity has to do with group belonging within inter-group encounters. The dynamic nature of intergroup

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[38] Ronald Atkinson, "The (Re)Construction of Ethnicity in Africa: Extending the Chronology, Conceptualization and Discourse," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*, ed. Paris Yeros (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1999), 15.
[39] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 4.
[40] Ibid.

relations makes ethnic phenomena quite fluid and reconstructable within different social contexts.

Ethnicity has been studied in different social sciences – political science, history, social anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistic behavioral sciences, and cultural anthropologys, with broad implications. It is beyond this project's scope to delve into the different implications of ethnicity in these sciences. The gamut of conceptual ambiguities in the notion of ethnicity has been extensively discussed among social scientists.[41] Moreover, social anthropology, from which this project draws its analysis, has several variances among extant definitions of ethnicity.[42] This is because the phenomenon of ethnicity has no single conceptual framework. Moreover, there are discrepancies between people's "description of their society and the anthropologists' description of the same society."[43] Ethnicity is a dynamic, constantly evolving phenomenon of personal and group relations. It involves collective identification, organization, and social consciousness.[44] In this project, it suffices to point out two main approaches to the conceptualization of ethnicity. These approaches show its complex and fluid nature while clarifying its role and power in Uganda's sociopolitical history.[45]

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[41] *See* Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Guibernau, Montserrat, and John Rex, eds. *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Migration*. Second. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011. Brass, Paul R. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi ; Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991.

[42] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, Third edition. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Joane Nagel, "Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture," *Social Problems* 41, no. 1 (1994): 152, https://doi.org/10.2307/309684.

[45] *See* Bruce J. Berman, *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, Working Paper (JICA Research Institute, November 17, 2010), 2, accessed November 18, 2019, https://econpapers.repec.org/paper/jicwpaper/22.htm. In this article, Berman argues that rather than atavistic survivals of stagnant primordial "tribal" identities and communities, African ethnicities are new not old. They are part of complex responses to colonial modernity. According to him, during the "most striking feature of pre-colonial period among African identities and communities was fluidity, heterogeneity and hybridity; a social world of multiple, overlapping and alternate identities with significant movement of people, intermingling of communities and cultural and linguistic borrowing." p.2. Also, Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims become killers,* contends (in the case of Rwanda's Hutu and Tutsi identities) that ethnic identities change as political identities along with the state that has enforced these identities," p.34. Kumar Rupesinghe's article "Internal Conflicts and their Resolution: The Case of Uganda, in *Conflict Resolution in Uganda,* ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 1989) 2 emphasizes the same dynamic nature of ethnicity with the claim – all forms of identities are included ranging from class, ethnic, religious, tribal, occupational to regional and linguistic groups.

1.1.3.1 Primordialism

Primordialism generally maintains that ethnic identity "is a fixed characteristic of an individual or community."[46] It affiliates ethnic identity to familial kinship. Proponents of this approach argue that people's ethnic identities have identifiable biological or genetic traits common to members of a particular group.[47] For primordialists, ethnic identity is a transmissible attribute that links members of ethno-groups into natural networks where they are born and find membership.[48] Members of a given ethnic group, according to this approach, share beliefs in sacred relation to their ancestors, phenotypical attributes like a common language, religion, customs, and traditions that give them specific uniqueness. Institutions of governance are organized along the hereditary lines of kings, queens, or chiefs. Moreover, members of a particular group, according to this view, "share subjective or psychological aspects of identity and distinctiveness, including emotional satisfaction."[49] And that group cohesion arises from the internal socio-psychological and primeval human need for belonging, security, and more importantly, survival.[50] This view claims that members of an ethnic group *feel* that their

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Also, John F. McCauley's *The Logic of Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Africa.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017):1, underscores the fluidity of religious or ethnic labels by stating that, conflicts in Africa sometimes change from ethnic and to religious "even as the opponents remain fixed."

[46] "Ethnic Conflict," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 8, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-conflict.

[47] Pierre L. van Den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (1978): 401–411, accessed April 4, 2020, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.1978.9993241.; Shaw, R. Paul, and Yuwa Wong. *Genetic Seeds of Warfare: Evolution, Nationalism, and Patriotism*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

[48] Wanjala S. Nasong'O, *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa: From Grievance to Violence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015), 1.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Frank P. Harvey, "Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence in the Balkans: Opportunities and Constraints for Theory and Policy," *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* 33, no. 1 (2000): 40, accessed March 8, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3232617. *See also* Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and News Sates: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*. Glenoe, IL: Free Press, 1963; also *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays*. (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Cynthia Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and*

community has existed from time immemorial. In espousing this view an American anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues that peoples in ethnic communities have a "sense of self [that] remains bound up in the gross actualities of blood, race, language, locality, religion or tradition."[51] He claims that primordial attachments involve;

> "immediate contiguity and kin connections… the givenness that stems from being born in a particular religious [or ethnic] community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto*; as a result, not merely personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself."[52]

For Geertz, in ethnic societies such primordial bonds are givens; they flow more from some sense of natural or religious affinity between members than from their social interaction. A political scientist Daniel Patrick Moynihan advances Geertz's view claiming that ethnic identity is 'ascriptive, a consequence of birth."[53] The primordialist approach ascribes its arguments on the grounds of kinship, suggesting that kinship has enduring significance for successive generations of ethnic groups. Nevertheless, as I will later demonstrate [in the constructivist view], the assumption of kinship and bloodline in ethnic groups is a mere social construct – a myth. With so much interbreeding, migrations, and intermixing between human populations over millennia, it is meaningless to talk about bloodlines [beyond family] and kinship while describing ethnic

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Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972; Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994; Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1997)

[51] Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 105–157 at 108.

[52] Ibid., 109.

[53] Harold Robert Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change*, 1st ed.. (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

boundaries.

According to the primordialist view, ethnic conflicts are inevitably tied to age-old antipathies among ethnic groups. It promotes the notion that ethnic conflicts are part of natural evolutionary processes or interactions between native groups predating the formation of modern states or nations.[54] Again, it tends to interpret violence based on ethnic identity as ritualistic or natural eruptions of 'tribal' clashes. A political scientist Mahmood Mamdani has criticized this approach stating that when referring to Africa, western political scientists often identify the 'traditional' with the 'tribal:' meaning that tribal society is traditional because it is primordial, timeless and unchanging. Conflicts, Mamdani asserts, are explained as 'tribalism.'[55] Mamdani further explains that in the West, the *form* of conflict in Africa is often presented tautologically as its own *explanation*. For instance, "two tribes fight because they are 'different' tribes."[56] As I will elaborate later, he adds that "tribalism is not an explanation, but an ideology."[57] It is an ethnic ideology – a system of ideas, discourses, narratives, practices and social processes produced within concrete historical circumstances and by particular social groups against persons of other groups.

Geertz further claims that "in the formation of new states, multiethnic societies tend to resist a generalized commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order [that threatens their] absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass, or what is even worse, domination by some other rival ethnic, racial, or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its of personality."[58] For Geertz the new political state configuration gravely subverts native ethnic uniqueness, aspirations, and self-understanding based on primordial attachments to kinship, language, cultural practices or customs and ancestral land. I challenge this assertion

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[54] Nyombi and Kaddu, "Ethnic Conflict in Uganda's Political History," 3.
[55] Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 2–3.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 3.
[58] Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," 109.

arguing that ethnic uniqueness and group aspirations are triggered in social contexts where a particular group has access to privilege or is under threat. I contend that 'primordial attachments' alone do not explain the eruption of resistance; rather the *processes* by which groups are incorporated into modern states can trigger certain sentiments to resist or accept new state formations. By processes I mean, ways in which groups are positioned and socialized; whether or not they have access to privilege or threatened by virtue of their distinctiveness in the new polity. In new state formations, the re-organizing elite can deny access to resources, pit groups against each other, or harmonize their relations for mutual benefit and cooperation. In cases where coercive force is deployed to destabilize primordial bonds violence resistance against these forces comes as a practical necessity for a group's survival. For primordialists, a process of modern state building within multiethnic societies is inevitably infused with 'ethnic violence.'

I find that the primordialist assumptions and conclusions do not fully account for modern ethnic relations in Uganda's context. Its conceptualization of ethnic identity is rather fixed, pinned down, and frozen in time. It disregards social reconstructions of identities and ethnic mobilization that precede violent conflicts. It also tends to overlook historical circumstances, events, agents, and processes that modify ethnic identity and inter-ethnic relations. In Africa's violent contexts a primordialist conceptualization of ethnicity overlooks the ways in which "postcolonial states reproduce and reinforce colonially constructed political identities"[59] under the 'divide and rule' policy. And that the identities of agents in these conflicts are forged within historically specific institutions and situations.[60] Social anthropologist Frank Harvey critiques the primordialist approach explaining that, "primordialist explanations of past and current [ethnic] conflicts in

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[59] Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Human rights studies online (text) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), xiii.
[60] Ibid., 8.

former Yugoslavia tend not to mention the foreign policies they engender."[61] He quotes David Carment and Patrick James to underscore the fact that "the existence and success of an ethnic political movement often depends on elites with skills and resources to sustain a movement."[62] Political elites can mobilize ethnic [or religious] identities to advance interests whose primary focus is neither ethnic nor religious. Either religious or ethnic identity can be co-opted for political mobilization in multi-ethnic or multi-religious societies. "Those labels [ethnic or religious] emerge as functions of politico-economic mobilization."[63] This is because ethnicity or religion inspires distinct and deep-seated passions among persons and communities. Political elites exploit these passions to achieve their strategic goals. Since the choice of sentiments [ethnic or religious or clan] to be mobilized is arbitrary, conflicts can change from ethnic to religious while the opponents remain fixed.

Here, it becomes clear that although the primordialist view highlights significant attachments of ethnic identity that can trigger conflict, it does not fully account for historical/social conditions that reshape and modify these identities in group relations. It also tends to gloss over human agency in ethnically motivated violence, and the legacy of regimes, structures, and processes that affect human relations. While I acknowledge the import of the primordialist approach in understanding ethnic identity, especially the profound significance of deep-seated sentiments of kinship, beliefs, language, customs… around with persons coalesce, I suggest a more nuanced view that accommodates the dynamic nature of ethnic identity. In fact, most conflicts in Africa have primordialist underpinnings. However, I challenge the notion that in a multi-ethnic context, ethnic diversity *as such* inexorably constitutes violence. Historical evidence shows that

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[61] Harvey, "Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence in the Balkans," 41.
[62] Ibid., 42. *See* David Carment and Patrick James, *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Managing and Preventing International Ethnic Conflict* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998)
[63] John F. McCauley, *The Logic of Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

most ethnically diverse countries in Africa are not necessarily the most prone to violent conflicts between ethnic groups. Tanzania for instance, the most ethnically diverse country in East Africa is not as ethnically polarized as is its northern neighbor, Uganda. Kenya though ethnically diverse, had no major ethnic clashes until the disputed 2007 presidential elections.[64] On the contrary, Somalia is one of the most ethnically and religiously homogenous countries in Africa, yet one of the most war-torn on the continent. Divisions arise from conflicts in social organization and economic activities – occupational stratifications between urban and rural sectors.[65] Rwanda and Burundi have similar cultural and religious homogeneity as Somali, yet in the recent past violent conflicts arose from colonially constructed forms of caste systems (occupational differentiation) that wrought disputes in power-sharing and economic access in these countries.[66]

This evidence suggests that, even in cases of violent conflicts in ethnically divided societies, it cannot be assumed that the mere existence of ethnic diversity is the explanation for violence. Rather, it is the ways in which ethnic (or religious) ideology by political elites provides tools of differentiation for either access to privilege or basis for exclusion. It can be concluded that "ethnic differences, even substantial differences, do not set a society inescapably on a path toward war."[67] The causes of violence are multifarious; explanations that focus on ethnic diversity oversimplify the rather complex phenomena and promote a stereotype peddled for far too long. In cases where violence is motivated by ethnic diversity, among other set of contributing factors, it often results from the conscious actions of political elite who reconstruct, co-opt, manipulate, and

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[64] Joseph O. Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," in *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa: From Grievance to Violence*, ed. Wanjala S. Nasong'o (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 67.

[65] Tom Onditi Luoch, "The Myth of Language as a Unifying Factor: Conflict in Monolingual Rwanda and Somalia," in *Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa: From Grievance to Violence*, ed. Wanjala S. Nasong'o (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 161.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).

instrumentalize symbols of diversity for political purposes. In the next section, I analyze a second approach that describes the construction of ethnic identity as a socio-historical process.

1.1.3.2 Constructionism

Constructivism generally holds that ethnic identity is only a *fact* of collective identity, if it is a *symbolic construction* of identity.[68] It means that ethnicity is a socially constructed identity. Symbols of collective identity include origin, language, customs, myths, signs, and other cultural codes. Although there are a variety of debates among scholars with regard to what actually constitutes 'constructivism,' the proponents converge on the basic notion that ethnic identification (or consciousness) is a socially and politically constructed phenomenon. It is a product of human thought and action within historical conditions and processes.[69] In this project it suffices to say that the normative point of reference in constructivism is that ethnicity is essentially a socio-historical and political phenomenon of group consciousness of belonging.[70] A major proponent of constructivism is Benedict Anderson who claims that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are *imagined*."[71] He implies that ethnic groups are essentially 'imagined political communities.' First, he explains that they are 'imagined' since members of a given group can "never actually know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each [member] lives the image of their

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[68] Daniel Cojanu, "Ethnicity as Social Fact and Symbolic Construction," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 149, LUMEN 2014 - From Theory to Inquiry in Social Sciences, Iasi, Romania, 10-12 April 2014 (September 5, 2014): 217, accessed November 20, 2019, http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814049337.

[69] Paris Yeros, "On the Uses and Implications of Constructivism," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa*, ed. Paris Yeros (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1.

[70] Paris Yeros, "Towards a Normative Theory of Ethnicity: Reflections on the Politics of Constructivism," in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa*, ed. Paris Yeros (New: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 110.

[71] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed.. (London: UK: Verso, 2016), 6.

communion."[72] For him the notion of shared identity only exists in the minds of members who derive self-understanding from common symbols of collective identification. Ethnic groups as political communities, according to Anderson are artifacts of a particular kind – they come into historical being, change over time, and command legitimacy.[73] Second, Anderson argues that these communities are 'imagined' as *limited*; because according to him, even the largest of them is not coterminous with all humankind. Each community is contiguous with another one distinct from itself. Third, he asserts that, they are 'imagined' as *sovereign;* because each claims a territorial stretch, envisions being free, and if under God, they claim to be directly so. Lastly, he contends that, these groups are 'imagined' as *community*. This means that each of these political communities conceives of itself as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is fellowship that makes the community possible – even as far as willing to die for their valued communion.[74] Anderson's description of ethnic groups goes beyond kinship and bloodline confinements. He envisions their constituting aspects within historical and political contexts. A second proponent of constructivism is Thomas Hylland Eriksen. For him ethnicity is closely related to notions of collective identity like, nation, nationalism, gender, local and religious identity.[75] Eriksen notes that ethnicity emerges and is made relevant in social situations and encounters where identities are defined and perceived by people. For him these identities are linked to political processes and are subject to negotiations – meaning that identities change in tandem with intergroup dynamics. Without concretely defining the phenomenon Eriksen states that "ethnicity has something to do with the *classification of people* and *group relationships.*[76]

Other scholars follow this line of thought; for instance, a social anthropologist Wanjala S.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 4.
[74] Ibid., 7.
[75] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 1.
[76] Ibid., 4.

Nasong'o asserts that ethnic identities are constructed and maintained through a six-step process that includes: the invention of a language, traditions, symbols, belief in common ancestry, creation of boundaries that distinguish "us" from "them" and finally a process of stereotyping that involves creating standardized notions of cultural distinctiveness of the 'other.'[77] This last step according to him involves portraying the other in negative and/or inferior terms while portraying one's own group in positive and/or superior expressions.[78] These stereotypes are triggered within particular social and historical conditions. Although there is no determined order in which these steps occur, they outline a basic conceptual structure for an historical construction of ethnic identity. These steps undergird the assumption among constructivists that ethnic identity evolves within historically conditioned contexts and through human agency. Allen W. Johnson and Timothy Earle's work *Economic Anthropology and Cultural Ecology* shows the development of human societies from 'family level societies,' to the 'local group' that pools together many households into permanent villages and clans, and finally a collection of local groups into chiefdoms.[79] They argue that, although members of chiefdoms are not related by blood, idioms of kinship remain central. Ethnicity for both Johnson and Earle, involves a group of people who may or may not factually be united by blood relations but believing or assuming that they are so united. Henry Summer Maine recognized in *Ancient Law* that kinship, functions not literally but as a prototype of 'legal fiction' – a notion he designated not only to those "who were indeed blood relations but also to those enslaved, abducted, and incorporated into the original group for a variety of reasons."[80] Terence Ranger highlights this point contending that "reading ethnicity into kinship

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[77] Nasong'O, *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa*, 2.
[78] Wanjala S., 3.
[79] *See* Allen W. Johnson and Timothy Earle, *The Evolution of Human Societies: From Foraging Group to Agrarian State*, Second. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
[80] Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 17.

or language is not a straightforward matter."[81] She means that, as long as kinship is based on assimilation rather than consanguinity, other elements of identification like language and customs co-exist, interact, and become syncretized.[82]

Following Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities" Crawford Young stresses an 'instrumentalist' component in constructivism. He asserts that ethnic identity can be used as a weapon in political combat and social competition.[83] In this sense, ethnic identity is contingent, situational and circumstantial; it is can be used as a tool in the pursuit of some social or political advantage. This understanding of ethnicity undergirds the socio-political factors that can trigger ethnic hostility. Political elite can create ethnic ideology to convince activists in sociopolitical contexts to exploit ethnic solidarities for political goals. Catharine Newbury articulates the Hutu-Tutsi cleavage in similar terms. She locates the problem of cleavage in the changing degrees of social stratification, reconstruction of identity, power dynamic, and relations in Rwanda over time, depending on the political, social and economic changes.[84] For Newbury, these changing degrees of social stratification are deliberate socio-political processes.

Although constructivist scholars rightly emphasize fundamental aspects of the socio-historical reality of ethnic identity, I would like to critique their approach and take a nuanced view. As I pointed out earlier in the primordialist approach, I think the constructivist scholars too overlook important primordial aspects of bloodline and kinship whether constructed, presumed or

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[81] Paris Yeros, ed., *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire : New York: Macmillan Press ; StMartin's Press, 1999), 5.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Crawford Young, "Evolving Modes of Consciousness and Ideology: Nationalism and Ethnicity," in *Political Development and the New Realism in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 77.
[84] M. Catharine Newbury, "Ethnicity in Rwanda: The Case of Kinyaga," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 48, no. 1 (1978): 17–29, at 26; accessed April 2, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1158708. *Also see* Paul J. Magnarella, "The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3 (2005), 801-822.

factual, that are crucial to understanding ethnic identity. They seem to suggest that ethnic identity becomes significant *only* as a socially constructed phenomenon, particularly triggered in sociopolitical contexts. They tend to assign a merely functional role to ethnic identity.

In order to offer a nuanced view of both these approaches, I take the line of thought of Crawford Young that tries to reconcile primordialism with constructivism. He argues that the primordialist claims are not actually opposed to the instrumentalist component in constructivism. Rather, as he elucidates, primordialism helps explain the power of affective ties with which interests are pursued within multi-ethnic contexts. By this he means that primordialism *captures* the noticeable passionate dimension in ethnic conflict. He underlines the capacity of primordial sentiments to arouse fears of extinction, anxieties, and insecurities which trigger collective aggression for self-preservation that are absent in other pursuits of interests.[85] In other words, the primordialist claims can help explore the psychological dimensions necessary to grasp the intensities that infuse ethnic conflict.[86] My view recognizes that primordialism helps to understand what is reconstructed, instrumentalized, and mobilized in the constructivist view. In other words, primordialism points to the content of ethnic identity that is often manipulated, altered, and triggered given human agency and social conditions.

It becomes clear that one ought not take ethnic identity or consciousness for granted or interpret it in rigid terms. Primordial elements of ethnic identity require explanation within dynamic social contexts that constructivism articulates. This can clarify how political elite in ethnically diverse societies exploit kinship, and other symbols around which ethnic groups coalesce, as weapons in pursuit of some advantage or resistance of threat.[87] This means that the

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[85] Young, "Evolving Modes of Consciousness and Ideology: Nationalism and Ethnicity."
[86] Atkinson, "The (Re)Construction of Ethnicity in Africa: Extending the Chronology, Conceptualization and Discourse," 22.
[87] Harvey, "Primordialism, Evolutionary Theory and Ethnic Violence in the Balkans," 45.

triggering of ethnic consciousness does not happen in a vacuum. First, it presupposes the existence of some form of 'cultural unit' (primordialism) that becomes triggered in sociopolitical contexts (constructivism). Second, it involves events, agents, and ideologies that undergird human interactions. As noted above, in some violent contexts in Africa, what is often identified as 'tribalism' is actually 'ethnic ideology.' It is the exploitation of ethnic elements [culture, language, regional or historical] to create negative discourses, narratives, and representations of persons of other groups. Ethnic ideology helps manipulate relations among diverse groups in a given geopolitical body. In contemporary Uganda the *form* ethnic ideology often takes is a set of negative stereotypes, and condensation. It engenders an internalized *differentiated* consciousness that inspires resentment against person of other groups. Precisely, ethnic ideology is not simply a set of ideas; rather it comprises social processes that undermines the identity of human persons of a particular group in relation to members of other groups. The object of ethnic ideology are differentiated persons.

It draws its significance, normativity, and power from decades of social differentiation or othering. Its efficacy, diffusion, and implications span generations. In the next section I analyze what I precisely mean by processes of differentiation or othering that form or deform group consciousness with regard to the identity of persons of other groups. These processes constitute ethnic prejudice that creates hostility in social, political and economic realms. Othering involves construction of 'otherness' that demarcates 'us' from 'them;' – it evolves from negative stereotypes and prejudices to hate, exclusion, and violence.

1.1.3.3 Othering: Ethnic Sociopolitical Mobilization and Association

In order to understand the reconstruction of ethnic identity in Uganda, and how it became imbued with politically charged sentiments of hostility, it is important to highlight the significance of differentiation or othering in ethnic relations. This process became embedded in colonial

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sociopolitical arrangements. As alluded to above, I argue that the reality of ethnic diversity in a society does not solely constitute ethnic hostility, rather the *processes* by which ethnic groups are deliberately pitted against each in the sociopolitical systems. In Uganda ethnic *differentiation* or *othering* undergirds the problem of social fragmentation, exclusion, and hostility among diverse groups vying for political control and economic privilege.

Philosophers, social psychologists, and linguistic analysts [in Pragmatics and Critical Discourse Studies] define differentiation or othering as a discursive construction of otherness, in which socially created and shared representations of persons of outgroups constitute polarized social interactions.[88] It is beyond the scope of this project to delve into this literature. It suffices to provide a broad understanding of differentiation or othering including its performative potential in fomenting hostility among ethnic groups.

John Powell and Stephen Menendian define 'differentiation' as a process that deliberately sketches social, political and economic identities out of social diversity to create competing alignments.[89] It is a mechanism by which diversity becomes instrumentalized to produce hostility. In this process 'difference' becomes 'opposition,' to create "differentiated social relations,"[90] fomenting exclusion and oppression of others.

In this process, attitudes, stereotypes, and biases against the 'other' are not merely cognitive phenomena, they have a social function. They are not mere *individual* beliefs or perceptions about persons of other groups, but ways of relation with those persons. Biases, negative stereotypes, and attitudes become incorporated into social structures that promote hatred,

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[88] Monika Kopytowska and Fabienne Baider, "From Stereotypes and Prejudice to Verbal and Physical Violence: Hate Speech in Context," *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 13, no. 2 (December 20, 2017): 133, accessed August 24, 2020, https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/lpp/13/2/article-p133.xml.

[89] John A. Powell and Stephen Menendian, "The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging," *Othering and Belonging*, June 29, 2017, 3, accessed November 18, 2019, http://www.otheringandbelonging.org/the-problem-of-othering/.

[90] Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 8.

exclusion and/or oppression of persons considered 'other.' As Gordon W. Allport says, there is an "an avertive or hostile attitude [toward] a person who belongs to [another] group, simply because he[*sic*] belongs to that group and therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to that group."[91] Persons of other groups are then excluded, avoided, or eliminated.

It becomes evident that othering is an anthropological problem because its object is the alienation of "embodied human difference."[92] It has specific consequences not only on the way human persons of other groups are perceived, but the way they are treated. Differentiation or othering is also fundamentally a theological problem, it creates divisions within the Body of Christ. I will explore this theological problem later. Here, I first analyze *othering* in terms of social and political mechanisms that shape the identity of persons belonging to other groups and how it influences one's behavior toward them.

A group of scholars who pioneered the study of mechanisms that shape ethnic identity were anthropologists working in the Copperbelt in Zimbabwe. They explored the conditions, events, and dynamics that triggered ethnic consciousness; specifically, through ethnic-based competition that eventually produced standardized attitudes among members of urban-ethnic groups.[93] These scholars noticed that although people in urban settings were not organized along ethnic lines, they gradually grew strongly self-conscious of their ethnic identity once competition associated with ethnic groups was introduced.[94] Members of ethnic groups developed standardized ways of behaving toward persons of other groups and socially oriented themselves to ethnic alignments. Thomas Eriksen points out that according to the Copperbelt findings especially by Clyde Mitchell,

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[91] Gordon W Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Unabridged, 25th Anniversary ed.. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley PubCo, 1990), 7.

[92] M. Shawn Copeland, "The Holy Spirit and the Challenge of Difference" (The Spirit in the New Millennium: The Duquesne University Annual Holy Spirit Lecture and Colloquium, 2018), 9.

[93] Atkinson, "The (Re)Construction of Ethnicity in Africa: Extending the Chronology, Conceptualization and Discourse," 17.

[94] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 22.

members of different ethnic groups developed standardized notions that became part of 'cultural knowledge' about other groups.[95] This 'knowledge' came in form of ethnic stereotypes that influenced behaviors of members of one group toward members of another group. The set of conditioned the scholars introduced in the Copperbelt study, triggered not only stereotypes among ethnic group but also forms of relation. As Eriksen reports, "Some groups had a 'friendly' relationship, some had a 'hostile' one, and yet others had 'joking relationships.'"[96] In other settings cultural, social, political, or economic conditions can trigger prejudiced actions toward persons of other groups. In recent history, the Rwanda genocide evolved from negative stereotypes to hate speech to atrocities of hate crimes.[97]

In Uganda's history, othering became part of the British colonial system that pitted ethnic groups against each other. Colonial administrators deliberately sketched social, political and economic identities to create competing alignments in the 'divide and rule' policy. The colonial legacy plays a significant function in competing ethnic configurations vying for political and economic privilege and fomenting hostility in contemporary society. In the next three sections, I will show how the British colonial masters instrumentalized ethnic diversity and geographical location to form opposing sociopolitical and economic arrangements under the 'divide and rule policy.'

1.1.3.4 Colonial Anthropology

In educational, political, economic and social sectors the British pursued new class formations and classifications that led to stratifications and cleavages.[98] Differentiation swept across disciplines; it involved categorizing people according to ethnic/racial-linguistic diversity.

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[95] Ibid., 23.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Kopytowska and Baider, "From Stereotypes and Prejudice to Verbal and Physical Violence," 138.
[98] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, xiii.

Mamdani reports that during the colonial era, "there had been a racist naming game in which anthropologists and administrators employed a wide variety of terms to refer to different 'tribes'[*sic*]."[99] For instance, in Malaya, Mamdani continues, anthropologists and administrators named people to caricaturize their own bodily features, as in *Orang Besisi* (people with scales) and "others were given outright derogatory names such as *Orang Mawas* (people like apes)."[100] He adds that some were named according to a geographical feature in their region, as in Uganda the *Nilotic* – relating to the Nile River. In education, classifications such as Bantu, Nilotics, Nilo-Hamites (Hamites[101] – descendants of Ham, son of Noah, Genesis 5:52), Sudanic and others began to be taught to school children.[102] Most disparaging of the new anthropological references was the designation 'tribe'[103] to describe people as a debased barbarous race.[104] 'Tribe' became, to use Valentin-Yves Mudimbe's phrase, 'a paradigm of difference'[105] between white Europeans and black Africans. It was also an inferiorized term of reference among black Africans themselves. As M. Shawn Copeland rightly expresses, "members of oppressed social groups too often internalize the dominant culture's 'stereotyped and inferiorized images' of themselves."[106] This term was a form of 'negative self-interpretation.'[107] Inferiorized expressions still play a substantial role in ways different groups describe each other. Negative stereotypes of primitivity, savagery, barbarity,

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[99] Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, 32.

[100] Ibid.

[101] *See also,* Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis," *Journal of African History* x, no. 4 (1969): 521–532.

[102] A.G. Ginywera-Pinchwa, "Is There a 'Northern Question'?," in *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*, ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989), 49.

[103] *See* Chris Lowe, "Talking about 'Tribe:'" Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis, *Africa Action,* (February 2008). *Also,* John N. Paden and Edward W. Soja, *The African Experience* Vol 2 (Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) 20-22; Aidan Southall, "The Illusion of Tribe," in Peter Gutkind, ed., *The Passing of Tribal Man in Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 28-51; Carol Fluehr-Lobban, Richard Lobban and Linda Zangari, "'Tribe': A Socio-Political Analysis, writing in UCLA's Ufahamu VII: 1 (1976), 143-165; Tami Hultman, "If It's Africa, This Must be a Tribe," *African News Online,* originally published on December 1, 1990, is available at https://allafrica.com/stories/200101080391.html

[104] Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980), 49.

[105] Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, African systems of thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), xii.

[106] Copeland, "The Holy Spirit and the Challenge of Difference," 11.

[107] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 1.

and backwardness are often attributed to persons of certain groups.

Groups aligned with the British westernization were deemed 'civilized' while those that resisted colonization were labelled unruly, savage, and barbarous tribes that needed to be brought under control and become disposed to European presence.[108] This was evident during the British conquest of Uganda. The British used *Baganda*[109] as agents to conquer other indigenous people in the region. Lwanga-Lunyiigo captures it well by quoting Harry Johnson a British imperial officer referring to the Baganda as the 'Japanese of Africa,'" – a phrase used as a form of endearment by the imperialists for the Baganda who collaborated, while disparaging others who did not.[110] Different ethnic groups were identified with different rungs of the 'tribal' ladder. Whereas the Bantu were recognized as more 'civilized,' the Nilotics were consigned to the lowest rung of the civilizational ladder. The new colonial order conferred more privileges on the 'civilized" than to the 'uncivilized.' This colonial system of differentiation created social stratification, exclusion, grievances, and eventually hostility in the post-independence era.

Consequently, colonial anthropological classifications assumed undue significance in the notions of cultural superiority and inferiority among different ethnic groups.[111] To this effect Mamdani quotes Nick Dirks asserting "that during the colonial period, anthropology supplanted history, as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and rule…"[112] The Bantu in Uganda who accommodated the British colonial system, were treated as culturally superior to others elsewhere in the region.

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[108] Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 104.
[109] *Baganda* are the people of the Kingdom of Buganda. The British first overtook the kingdom of Buganda, from which they colonized the rest of region that constitutes the modern nation of Uganda. In fact, the name "Uganda" is merely the Swahili version of Buganda.
[110] Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict in Uganda" (Makerere University: Makerere Institute of Social Research, 1987), 6, accessed October 28, 2019, https://core.ac.uk/display/19917190.
[111] Ginywera-Pinchwa, "Is There a 'Northern Question'?," 49.
[112] Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, 30. *See* Nick Dirks, *Caste of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)

British colonial administrators gave stereotyped labels according geographic region. For instance, northern ethnic groups were labelled 'aggressive,' 'martial' and 'natural warriors'[113] while the Bantu deemed smart, gentle and honest. The British would swap these labels insofar as they served colonial interests. During conquest, the British promoted a similar myth about the Baganda who served as colonial agents. A political historian Kumar Rupesinghe explains that the British claimed that the "Baganda had a long tradition of martial dominance over their neighbors."[114] However, once the initial conquests had been achieved, and peaceful administration firmly established, the Baganda soldiers were disarmed, an exercise completed in 1905.[115] Thereafter these labels were applied to Nilotics whom the British began to recruit in the armed forces. As Phares Mutibwa states, the British then began to convince Baganda soldiers that "they were too short in stature for the army and police. Recruitment was served for northerners and people from the East who were naturally martial."[116] Mutibwa argues that the British swapped these labels to persuade the Baganda to abandon the armed forces lest, the Baganda would became too strong and put the British colonial rule in danger. These stereotypes served well the colonial administrative interests.

1.1.3.5 Colonial Political System

Colonial administration involved two closely related strategies: First, the 'divide and rule policy'[117] – an imperial modality that maintained the separation of ethnic groups into distinct

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[113] P. Godfrey Okoth, "Uganda's Geopolitical Significance since 1894," in *Uganda: A Century of Existence*, ed. P. Godfrey Okoth, Manuel Muranga, and Ernesto Okello Ogwang (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995), 11.

[114] Kumar Rupesinghe, ed., *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*, International Alert (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1989), 26.

[115] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 6.

[116] Ibid.

[117] "*Divide and Rule* - Oxford Reference," accessed June 6, 2020, https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.bc.edu/view/. The Oxford Reference Dictionary defines 'divide and rule' as a political strategy aimed at gaining or retaining power by cultivating disunity among 'potential' opponents. This is achieved often by co-opting some individuals and groups while excluding others. Furthermore, although in principle this political strategy may refer to the manipulation of a range of different identities, including class or creed (cf India), in the African context

camps and so secured stability of the colonial project.[118] Second, was the 'indirect rule' system

that co-opted native elite in imperial governance.[119] Mahmood Mamdani reports that during the

colonial period "defining and managing difference was developed as the essence of

governance."[120] Although managing difference, '*divide et impera*' can be traced back to the old

Roman system of governance, the British adopted it after the Indian Mutiny of 1857[121] before it

was transported to the African colonies by the end of the nineteenth century.[122]

      This policy mostly promoted by Sir John Lawrence and his associates in the Punjab state

of India, was first applied in practice in the Indian army post-1857 revolt.[123] After the 1857 Indian

Mutiny the British re-organized the army in order to obstruct unity among the *sepoys*[124] whose

cohesion was instrumental in the revolt against the British. The great diversity of peoples and

creeds in the army and India in general, gave the best opportunity for the policy and the prevention

of the recurrence of another revolt. The fewer the elements of unity there were among the natives

in the army, the better for the British in controlling the troops. In essence, the 're-organization'

involved strategically dividing up and separating the army into distinct smaller local corps

according to nationalities, castes, and religions. Furthermore, a new element was introduced:

exploiting *esprit de corps* of each native group the British activated old animosities among them.

Maintaining antagonisms was so crucial to neutralize unity and conspiracy. It was necessary that

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the British used the 'divide and rule' policy in the management of ethnic groups. Eventually it promoted winner-takes-all political dynamics and political tribalism.

[118] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 6, 10.

[119] Richard Morrock, "Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist 'Divide and Rule' Strategy upon the Colonized Peoples," *Science & Society* 37, no. 2 (1973): 129, accessed April 6, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40401707.

[120] Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, 2–3.

[121] Neil Stewart, "Divide and Rule: British Policy in Indian History," *Science & Society* 15, no. 1 (1951): 49, accessed June 5, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40400043.

[122] Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, 8.

[123] Stewart, "Divide and Rule," 49.

[124] According to Wikipedia, a *sepoy* was originally the designation given to a professional Indian infantryman, usually armed with a musket, in the armies of the Mughal Empire. Later this designation was used by the British in reference to Indian troops in the British colonial army.

members of one caste [class or religion] despise, fear or dislike members of the other. As Neil Stewart reports, "a [British] Chief of Staff found inspiration in the manner in which the traditional enmity of the Punjab for the Kings of Delhi had been used to crush the mutineers." Again, Steward quotes a British officer, "It was not because they loved us, but because they hated Hindustan…"[125] The British created several local armies that remained distinct and separate from each other even when under the same large army.

In Uganda's context, instead of bringing diverse ethnic groups into harmonious associations, the colonial government triggered oppositional relations in state and society. For ease of control, deterrence of political organization, and uprisings, ethnic groups were pitted against each other.[126] To expand its domination and crash resistance, the colonial administration armed certain groups [for instance the Baganda] in the conquest of others, creating and sharpening inter-ethnic suspicion and resentment.[127] Closely related to the above, was the indirect rule.

The indirect rule involved using local chiefs as British agents to rule over regions in the colony. Moreover, for the colonial rule to be effective, it subverted the indigenous system of rulers by replacing them with its own elected local chiefs to administer on its behalf.[128] In some regions of Uganda, Baganda chiefs were appointed as non-traditional civil service chiefs in those territories.[129] The presence of these non-traditional colonial appointees was met with opposition. This system provoked resentment among ordinary people against these colonial agents. In fact, indirect rule was another side of 'divide-and-rule' – the purpose of which was to create divisions among people of the colony. Divisions made the task of colonial rule much easier, but the

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[125] Stewart, "Divide and Rule," 54.
[126] Nyombi and Kaddu, "Ethnic Conflict in Uganda's Political History," 6. *Also* Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes.* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.), 6-10; *See also,* Samwiri Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educations Books, 1987), 59
[127] Ibid, 7.
[128] Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 118.
[129] Mutibwa Mukasa, *A History of Uganda: The First 100 Years 1894 - 1994*, 68.

formation of a united Uganda more difficult.

Moreover, indigenous kings, chiefs, and clan leaders were coerced to sign treaties, by which the British drew regional boarders.[130] This process created deeply rooted ethnic loyalties and territorial citizenships.[131] Consequentially different groups did not unite as citizens of one country. Rather, what mattered was each one's indigenous identity.[132] As a result ethnic identity became "a resource to be mobilized or an instrument to be used in pursuit of political and economic aspirations."[133] Eventually, Uganda became a geopolitical construct or a mere collection of mini-states or nations, all vying for political control of the central government after independence. This became evident during the run-up to Independence when kingdoms of Buganda, Bunyoro, and Toro threatened to secede from the newly created nation, if their traditional interests were not honored.[134] The colonial legacy of fomenting divisions emerged into sociopolitical and economic exclusion and discriminative competition in contemporary society.

Furthermore, the colonial state was autocratic. As an American political scientist David E. Apter attests, "it must be recalled that, 'indirect rule,' insofar as it became a policy, was based on autocratic principles."[135] "It" [policy]," he continues, "was not intended to be a training ground for democracy, nor was it regarded as a basis on which self-government would be established."[136] In establishing far-reaching decisions, the colonized people, including appointed chiefs took no part in decision making processes of the central administration. They merely carried out orders as subordinates to the colonial officials. A Ugandan lawyer and scholar Apolo Makubuya argues that

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[130] Hugh Dinwiddy, "The Search for Unity in Uganda: Early Days to 1966," *African Affairs* 80, no. 321 (1981): 502, accessed October 10, 2019, http://www.jstor.org/stable/721989.
[131] Nyombi and Kaddu, "Ethnic Conflict in Uganda's Political History," 7.
[132] Mutibwa Mukasa, *A History of Uganda: The First 100 Years 1894 - 1994*, xi.
[133] Nyombi and Kaddu, "Ethnic Conflict in Uganda's Political History," 3.
[134] Dinwiddy, "The Search for Unity in Uganda," 502.
[135] David E. Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism*, Second. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), 219.
[136] Ibid.

"through patronage, the British effectively influenced the politics and economics of its colonies to further material interests during and long after the colonial rule."[137] And that "the use of material and other inducements to patronize African chiefs to collaborate with colonial administrators in dominating and exploiting their own people is the genesis of the endemic corruption in postcolonial Africa."[138]

Lastly, British colonial rule was aggressive and oppressive. It was intolerant of opposition and relied on use of violence rather than dialogue.[139] As John Hall, a British governor of Uganda (1944-1952) attests, "the British colonial rule wielded 'a great deal of power,' over the people.[140] Ugandans decried the use of the colonial "police and army as the major means of implementing law and order."[141] Ugandans reproached colonial officers for their unnecessary use of force in denying the citizens their inalienable rights, like freedom of association and expression, which the colonial government tightly monitored, controlled and often denied. The British executed their rule in a manner that was antithetical to the political, social, and economic development of the colonized. These colonial methods have parallels in post-independence despotic regimes that use aggressive, oppressive, and exploitative methods to control citizens.

1.1.3.6 Colonial Economic System

The third area of fragmentation was the socioeconomic. In order to analyze the nature of colonial economy, an understanding class formation is important. During the colonial period '*class*' was a form economic relation. Racial and ethnic classes were income groups with differentiated access to privilege and wealth. Control over wealth gave a particular group dual

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[137] Apollo Nelson Makubuya, *Protection, Patronage or Plunder: British Machinations and (B)Uganda's Struggle for Independence* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 5.
[138] Ibid., 7.
[139] Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict in Uganda," 2.
[140] Beverley Gartrell, "The Ruling Ideas of a Ruling Elite: British Colonial Officials In Uganda 1944-1952." (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1979), http://search.proquest.com/docview/.
[141] Gukiina, *Uganda; A Case Study in African Political Development*, 2.

control; over products (things) and producers (persons).[142] Mamdani identifies class relations as relations of *appropriation*: central to class relation according to him, is the arrogation of resources by one social group to another. In this regard, class relations are relations of power.[143] In that, class formations are not merely social stratifications; rather they are political relations with differentiated access to power and privilege. What we see in Uganda as class formations, are indeed ethnic political power formations. Again, as Mamdani clarifies, "class organization is political organization, class consciousness is political consciousness, and class conflict is political conflict."[144] Therefore, in the management of Uganda, colonial class formations were important in *mediating* imperial rule through racial and ethnic classes situated in cascading positions of the economic structure. The colonial regime needed local agents to mediate its power. Indirect rule required a class of collaborators – those who received favorable treatment in exchange for maintaining law and order. In this way, the economic system had political significance.

Colonial class formations began with the Buganda Agreement of 1900 in which a class of notables was formed, and to whom the British granted special land privileges.[145] This also meant that the land of Buganda, being a conquered territory, was dispensed at the will of the British colonial masters to whomever was loyal and willing to maintain the colonial status quo. In 1903 Sir Harry Johnson, a British colonial governor explained in a memorandum to the Colonial Office in London: "One result of this Land settlement," he reported, "has been to make the British government the owner of more than half the soil of the kingdom of Buganda."[146] In this land

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[142] Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 7.
[143] Ibid., 8. [Max Weber was the first to make a clear distinction between wealth and power – wealth being a relation between person and thing – while power is relation between person to person. However, in productive wealth, this distinction becomes ambiguous; since those who control the means of production control the subjects – the producers.]
[144] Ibid., 11.
[145] Ibid., 41.
[146] Mamdani quotes from, *Memorandum* by Harry Johnson, No.13, East African Confidential, London, March 2, 1903.

settlement the colonial government parceled out land to Buganda traditional hierarchy – from the *Kabaka* (king) to the village chiefs on condition they remained loyal to the British hegemony.

Buganda and later Uganda became a British "Protectorate," literary to protect British interests. The colonial government formulated an economic structure that facilitated the accumulation of wealth and control of resources for the foreign power and its local associates. As such its center of allegiance was Britain, not Uganda. This is very evident in the writings of the Captain Frederick Lugard, an agent of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) responsible for military conquest of Uganda. He wrote, "Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital and energy have not been, and never will be expended in developing the resources of Africa on motives of pure philanthropy…"[147] It becomes evident that the British conquest was not in the interest of the native peoples, rather for the sake of "raw materials, cheap labor, and markets for British industry, goods and services."[148] Protection of the rights of the natives was not the primary goal; where it happened it was incidental.

Once the British secured dominion over Buganda, a class of chiefs acted as the vanguard in consolidating colonial rule over the rest of the colony for economic interests. *Baganda* armies were instrumental in conquering kingdoms of Bunyoro and Busoga. The British armed Baganda to conquer Bunyoro a people deemed hostile to European 'civilization.'[149] The Baganda chiefs shared in the spoils and grew wealthy, while the kingdom of Buganda gained more territory from East Bunyoro. The land seized from Bunyoro subsequently known as the 'lost counties' [of Bunyoro] became one of the most contentious political issues in the post-independent period

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[147] Sir F. D Lugard (Frederick Dealtry), *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Empire online. Section 5, Race, class, imperialism and colonialism, 1607-2007 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), 617.
[148] Makubuya, *Protection, Patronage or Plunder: British Machinations and (B)Uganda's Struggle for Independence*, 5.
[149] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 2.

especially in the 1966 crisis.[150] As Dan Mudoola rightly puts it, "the colonial conquest process, the carving up of Uganda into administrative units and subsequent socio-economic classes conditioned the emergence of interest groups which eventually played critical roles in the post-colonial processes."[151] He further notes that the colonial situation generated polarized sub-cultures among interest groups. These divisions could not sustain cohesive institutions for conflict resolution and resource allocation in post-independence period.[152]

While the Baganda landlords and chiefs helped maintain law and order in the colony, in early 1900s the British introduced another class. Asian immigrants formed a privileged class acting as middlemen between Europeans and Africans to further weaken social integration.[153] In 1908 the Indian business community formed the Kampala Indian Association to protect Indian interests.[154] By 1921 the Central Council of Indian Association had emerged. The council's goals included political, educational, social and economic interests, and above all fostering Indian unity. The Indian community prospered during the colonial period. Beginning with 1916 Indian business owners acted as middlemen in the cotton industry. Indians owned more than two-thirds of Uganda's ginneries, while at the same time owning other agricultural businesses in sugarcanes, sisal, lumber, tea, transport, and retail industries. The management of large sugar plantations, for instance in Lugazi and Kakira, were reserved for Indian immigrants. Eventually Asian business people dominated both urban and rural trade and blocked the efforts of African people to run small businesses. According to Mamdani, "the objective role of the Asian trader was to extend the hold of market, and the class that controlled the terms of exchange in the market…"[155] It was to the

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[150] Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 43.
[151] Dan M. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1993), 6.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 8.
[154] Thomas P. Ofcansky, *Uganda: Tarnished Pearl of Africa*, Nations of the Modern World. Africa (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 27.
[155] Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 44.

Indians that Africans pawned all produce. Asian control of coffee-curing and cotton ginning processes eventually attracted discontent and angered the local people. The riots of 1945 and 1949 were directed against Asian business class that controlled wholesale and retail trade.[156]

Colonial system further introduced a discriminative and racially segregated society in education, housing, and health systems. Europeans and Asians in Uganda attended different schools from the black Africans. These systems aimed at entrenching racial superiority for white European colonialists, followed by Asians while keeping black African at the bottom. At the same time, there were different strata of classification among black Africans as I indicated above. This class system made Africans incapable of fully participating in the economic and political life of their own country. Racial segregation prompted local Ugandans to form the Uganda National Movement that led the 1959 riots and the boycott of all foreign-owned businesses in Kampala,[157] thus forcing approximately half of Indian businesses out of Uganda.[158] The disparities in economic and political domains were obvious between white and Asian immigrants, and between blacks of south and north. These differentials coincided with racial and ethnic divisions, as did education and geographical location. In public service, higher incomes reserved for Asian immigrants set them above their black African counterparts in similar positions.[159]

In sum, it becomes clear that Uganda was founded on divisive social, political, and economic structures. This analysis makes evident that the British imperial project weaved three main interrelated mechanisms of domination into a single colonial system. Anthropology, politics, and economics were bound up in one seamless garment of colonial control. Consequently, colonial

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[156] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 8.
[157] Makubuya, *Protection, Patronage or Plunder: British Machinations and (B)Uganda's Struggle for Independence*, 12.
[158] Ofcansky, *Uganda*, 28.
[159] Abdul B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 6.

policies generated three self-reinforcing social structures: First, discourses, narratives and representations of indigenous ethnic diversities morphed into identities of opposition and conflict. Second, the 'divide and rule' policy not only strengthened ethnic loyalties but also pitted groups against each other. Deliberate economic and social disparities sharpened division; including the introduction of new social stratifications and cleavages.[160] Analyzing these processes and structures from an anthropological standpoint, it also become evident that they constitute the construction of embodied human otherness – that undergirds the exclusion, oppression, and hostility among persons based on their ethnic diversity. From a theological standpoint, embodied human difference interpreted in terms *opposition* is a challenge to building unity in Christian communities of diverse ethnic identities. I will analyze this point at the end of the chapter. In the next section, I examine the effects of British colonial legacy on contemporary Uganda.

SECTION II: COLONIAL LEGACY AND CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

1.2 Ethnic Political Mobilization and Violence in Contemporary Uganda

This section I argue that a history of protracted exclusion, grievances, and violence in the contemporary period arises from anthropological, political, and economic mechanisms of fragmentation set in motion in the colonial period. Like in the colonial era, *difference* construed as *opposition* is an institutionalized form of governance. It is one of the factors that explains the fragmented nature of contemporary Uganda. Most scholars articulate social, political, and economic factors while glossing over processes and mechanism that engender cleavages in intergroup relations. As I elaborated above, these processes are fundamentally anthropological in nature because they touch on human identity and relations. They generate mutual exclusion persons of different ethnic groups. I argue that processes that affect human identity and damage

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[160] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, xiii.

relations profoundly undermine social, political, and economic structures that hinge on harmonious human interactions. Restructuring the political, and economic structures is as important as reforming human identity and relations. A process of social reconciliation requires acknowledging and proposing discursive methods to reform human identity, and mend relations among competing interest groups. A quick overview of the history of contemporary Uganda depicts how ethnic fragmentation accounts for the victims of ethnic violence.

1.2.1 Post-independence Political Environment: Ethnic Violence, Coups, and Civil Wars

> "Bullets rather than ballots have dominated politics in Uganda since independence…force has dominated the formal political system…predatory military rule and civil wars have destroyed lives, skills, and assets; undermined institutional competence and accountability, caused widespread personal trauma, suppressed autonomous organizations in civil society and intensified ethnic hostility and conflict."[161]

The quote by Edwin A. Brett generally summarizes Uganda's post-independence sociopolitical environment. In the contemporary period violent conflicts have been articulated in ethnic terms.[162] Following Independence of October 1962 power struggles based on ethnic loyalties became quite striking. Sectarian interests of each ethnic group competed for control of the central government.[163] This became a contest between north and south. As indicated above the British colonial administration provided access to education and economic privilege to the south, while the northern ethnic groups were recruited in military and security forces. This created deep resentment between north and south, and it accounts for the north-south divide.

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[161] E. A. Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda: The Rôle of the Military in Politics," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 1 (1995): 129, accessed June 8, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/161549.
[162] Mutibwa Mukasa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics*, xi.
[163] Mutibwa Mukasa, *A History of Uganda: The First 100 Years 1894 - 1994*, 189.

Only four years after independence in 1966, Milton Obote[164] (from the north) rose to power in a coup with the support of northern ethnic groups who controlled the armed forces. Among the southern kingdoms, Buganda which had played a significant historical role in the formation of Uganda, became the object of resentment of Obote's regime. Margery Perham, an Oxford scholar rightly acknowledged Buganda's centrality in Uganda. "Britain built up Uganda," she wrote, "…around and above [the kingdom of] Buganda, making it [Buganda] a heart that could never, without fatal result, be torn from the larger body politic and economic."[165] Her remark was like an epitaph of Uganda's demise; ethnic hostility not only destroyed Buganda, but also spread to the rest of country.

Obote's government was oppressive. In June 1966 extrajudicial killings escalated to epic proportions. Id Amin the army commander, under Obote's directives unleashed a savage and unprecedented slaughter of people of Buganda. For instance, civilians were loaded on military trucks, murdered and disposed of. Many victims while still alive were thrown over Murchison Falls on River Nile and some buried alive in mass graves.[166] Within one year, the death toll was estimated in thousands.[167] In June 1967 Obote annulled the monarchy of Buganda and its traditional institutions: confiscating its traditional land, turning its headquarters into military barracks and dividing up Buganda territory into administrative districts.[168] Other traditional kingdoms (Bunyoro, Ankole, Toro) were abolished as well. Obote's regime struck at the very

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[164] Milton Obote was a leader of Uganda People's Congress (UPC), a political party formed in 1961 shortly before Independence in 1962.

[165] Mutibwa Mukasa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics*, x. Mutibwa quotes these lines from; London *Times* of 10 February, 1954.

[166] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 39.

[167] Actual figures are hard to obtain; different scholars give different numbers! Scholars from the south, tend to give higher numbers, while those from the north report lower numbers. For example, Phares Mutibwa reports that, in the aftermath of that infamous day of the attack on Edward Mutesa's palace 2,000 people were murdered. *See* Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: Unfulfilled Hopes,* 39.

[168] Mutibwa Mukasa, *A History of Uganda: The First 100 Years 1894 - 1994*, 211.

center of ethnic identity and pride of the people in the south. He also alienated members of other southern ethnicities from government positions. The suspicion against 'people from the north' that had been expressed in stereotypes crystalized into actions. These negative perceptions became ingrained in the minds of people in the south.

Not only in government but also within military ranks there were growing ethnic tensions. Obote particularly relied for personal allegiance on troops from his own ethnic group, whom he lavishly paid.[169] He eventually conscripted a person army from among soldiers of his own *Langi* ethnic group. The army was split along ethnic lines: soldiers from 'West Nile' ethnic groups (especially the *Kakwa*) allied themselves to Id Amin, while the *Acholi* and *Langi* ethnic groups rallied behind Obote.[170] Between 1969 and 1971 tensions between Obote and Amin reached a tipping point. When Obote tried to eliminate Amin from the military, Amin overthrew him on January 25, 1971 while Obote was attending a commonwealth meeting in Singapore.[171]

Id Amin began to eliminate members of the *Acholi* and *Langi* allied to Obote from the army and government. Many were arrested, detained without trial, executed, or simply disappeared. Amin instituted torture houses and public executions especially the infamous *Firing Squads* of the 1970s.[172] Much has been written about the 'irrationality and excesses' of Amin's regime.[173] I will not repeat them here. However, it suffices to say that over a period of eight years tens of thousands of Ugandans had fallen prey to Amin's henchmen. His murderous regime had thousands of

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[169] Christopher Wrigley, "Four Steps Towards Disaster," in *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988), 34.

[170] Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, 72.

[171] Tom Cooper and Adrien Fontanellaz, *Wars and Insurgencies of Uganda 1971-1994*, vol. 23, Africa at War (Solihull, West Midlands: Helion & Company, 2105), 11.

[172] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 44.

[173] Mutibwa, "Lion Rampant: Amin's Consolidation of Power and the Ensuing Violence' in *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes*, pp 104-114. *See also* Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1982).

executions and led tens of thousands of Ugandans to flee the country.[174] In 1972 Amin expelled all people of European and Asian descent and expropriated their assets.[175] At the end of Amin's reign of terror it is estimated that more than half a million Ugandans had been executed, while others simply disappeared, and a lot more displaced or went into exile. Amin not only racked havoc in Uganda but also provoked war with neighboring countries like Tanzania. His reckless behavior triggered regional animosity against his regime. As a result, neighboring countries supported militia groups that eventually toppled his government in April 1979.

Ugandan exiles organized along ethnic lines, formed several militia groups operating mainly from Tanzania. The most significant of these were; Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) headed by Museveni, Save Uganda Movement and others allied to the former president Milton Obote also in exile. Assisted by Julius Nyerere the Tanzania president, and the Tanzania People's Defense Forces these militia groups formed the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) – a coalition army that ousted Idi Amin.[176] Soon after Amin's downfall, ethnic loyalties, sectarian interests, and the 'winner takes all' struggle split the coalition into rival militia groups and political parties all vying for political control.[177]

In early 1980 a military commission loyal to former president Obote organized the 1980 general elections.[178] Wide-spread irregularities, rigging, ethnic polarization, and pervasive political violence undermined the legitimacy of the elections that had declared Obote winner. Other political parties including Uganda People's Movement (UPM) led by Yoweri Museveni (current president) rejected the election results, formed guerilla movements and took to arms. Each armed group decried injustices against Obote's undemocratic and "corrupt military-dominated

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[174] Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, 32–3.
[175] Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda," 139.
[176] Mutibwa Mukasa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics*, 168.
[177] Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda," 140.
[178] Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985*, 128.

political system.[179]

In February 1981 a civil war broke out within what is called the '*Luwero Triangle,*'[180] in Buganda, to extricate Obote's second government and his northern allies. In retaliation Obote went on a killing spree, launched indiscriminate relentless military massacres of the people of Buganda. The attacks by Obote's soldiers were characterized by a disregard for human rights, military excesses, terror, and massive loss of life.[181] In January 1983 Obote launched the notorious *Operation Bonanza* – a relentless indiscriminate murderous military operation that destroyed lives, villages, small towns, and executed thousands of people including school children.[182] For instance, on May 23, 1984 Obote's soldiers massacred approximately 300 students, teachers, and priests of an Anglican Theological College and Seminary at Namugongo in retaliation for an attack on Obote's military barracks (at Mpoma satellite) by guerillas.[183] In May 1982 bodies of schoolgirls were dumped in Namanve forest by Obote's soldiers. Indiscriminate killings of civilians and random dumping of bodies became common scenes in Buganda in particular and the south in general during Obote's second regime. Grim sites of decomposing bodies littered roadsides, school buildings, playgrounds, and farms in Luwero Triangle. Bodies dumped by Obote's military floated in lakes and rivers sending shock waves throughout the south. Sporadic rounding up of civilians in towns and villages by military trucks many of whom were killed or disappeared, traumatized the people in the south. One of the infamous military operations was called *Panda Gari,* a Swahili expression meaning, 'get onto the truck.' Military personnel made surprise rounding up of civilians in towns, market places, sports events or religious services,

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[179] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 45.
[180] *Luwero Triangle*, is a region in the kingdom Buganda where most fierce fighting in the civil war of 1980-86 took place and egregious atrocities were committed during Obote's second government.
[181] Ofcansky, *Uganda*, 54.
[182] Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985*, 146.
[183] Ofcansky, *Uganda*, 55.

boarded them onto army trucks and never to be seen again.[184] Tens of thousands were killed, disappeared or displaced from 1980 to 1986. Sites of tens of thousands of skulls and bones are still on display in Luwero Triangle – a grim reminder of Obote's hate of the Baganda and people in the south. During military operations Obote's soldiers not only killed civilians they also raped women and girls, looted and vandalized property with impunity. Amnesty International Report of June 1985 enumerated the following crimes against Obote's regime: unlawful detention by the army, ignoring legal safeguards, torture, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, death in prisons, political killings of civilians among others.[185]

The loathing of Obote and hatred against 'people from the north' helped mobilize support for the cause of the guerilla movements. On January 25, 1986 the guerillas under the National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) led by Yoweri Museveni overthrew Obote's second government. The NRM established a 'southern-based' government that enhanced regional political consciousness.[186]

In conclusion, it becomes evident why painful memories of Obote and Amin's atrocities are deeply engrained in minds of people in the south especially survivors and families of victims! Due to collective resentment of people in the south it is common to attribute culpability of past crimes to members of northern ethnic groups especially the *Acholi* and *Langi*. The failure to prosecute perpetrators of crimes in Luwero Triangle, left bitterness and shaped the negative perception of northerners. These negative attitudes had a dreadful impact on the nature of ethnically motivated conflicts in northern Uganda especially during the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency as I briefly describe in the next section.[187]

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[184] Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985*, 147.
[185] Amnesty International, "Uganda: Six Years after Amin," last modified June 1985, accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/document/?indexNumber=AFR59%2f042%2f1985&language=en.
[186] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 47.
[187] Ibid., 46.

1.2.2. Insurgency and Ethnic-Cultic Warfare in Northern Uganda

In March 1986 the south-based National Resistance Army (NRA) launched a crackdown on former Acholi soldiers who had retreated to the north. A political scientist Joseph Wasonga notes that this clampdown was meant to hold these former soldiers accountable for murders they had committed in the south during Obote's regimes, especially the atrocities in Luwero Triangle.[188] Robert Gersony also attests that the crackdown was meant to stifle any attempt to consolidate a force against the new government, or to stifle a comeback to recapture power. However, according to Gersony this move turned out to be a revenge mission against former soldiers in particular and northern ethnic groups in general.[189] The NRA committed similar atrocities in the north almost equal to the measure of atrocities Obote soldiers perpetuated in Luwero Triangle.[190] Looting, burying people alive, rape, murder, and burning entire villages were committed by NRA. For instance, in August 1986 the 35th battalion of NRA massacred dozens of civilians in Namokora village [of Tito Okello, one of Obote's top army Generals] in Kigtum. In Wasonga's judgement these crimes were committed partly in retaliation for the killings in Luwero Triangle. Other examples among many can be cited: In July 1987, the NRA executed 97 civilians at Kona Kilak in Gulu.[191] In June 1988, over 40 civilians were massacred at Koch Goma in the Amuru District according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) report of 2004.[192] These actions by the NRA reinforced prejudices and became the precursor for the next phase of the conflict. According to the

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[188] Ibid., 48.

[189] Robert Gersony, "The Anguish of Northern Uganda: Results of a Field-Based Assessment of the Civil Conflicts in Northern Uganda" (US Agency for International Development - Kampala Uganda, October 2, 1997).

[190] Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and The Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda, 1986-1997*, trans. Mitch Cohen, Eastern African Studies (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999), 165. *See also,* Chris Dolan, *Social Torture: The Case of Northern Uganda, 1986-2006*, vol. 4, Human Rights In Context (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); *Also,* Adam Branch, *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[191] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 48.

[192] International Crisis Group, "Building a Comprehensive Peace Strategy for Northern Uganda" (Policy (Africa) Briefing No. 27, June 23, 2005), 2.

ICG report, the NRA atrocities in the north, fed the narrative that this was a revenge mission to eliminate northern ethnic groups.

The retaliatory operations by Museveni's government became the breeding ground for ethnically organized guerilla warfare in the north. The ICG reports that the emergence of Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) by former Obote soldiers appealed to the Acholi because it represented a struggle against retribution by a south-based government and the hope to recapture power.[193] However as the UPDA's capacity for a sustained rebellion failed, a new cultic movement emerged.[194] A 27-year old Acholi woman Alice Auma claimed to be possessed by a *spirit* (Lakwena), formed the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSHF) with a mission to topple Museveni's new government that was deemed to exterminate the Acholi. Behrend explains that "the HSMF was a social rebellion against the newly established [southern] order and it portended nationalist revival in the context of the restoration of ethnic identity."[195] However, Lakwena's unconventional military tactics that included, marching to battle singing hymns, with stones and clubs could not match the machine guns of the NRA. The HSMF was defeated early 1987 and Lakwena fled to Kenya where she died in 2005. The group's power vacuum was immediately filled by Sevarino Likoya Kiberu, Alice Auma Lakwena's father. He attracted some of his daughter's followers to form the Lord's Army (LA). However, a year later Lukoya's LA movement was defeated by the NRA in 1989.[196]

1.2.2.1 The Rise of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) by Joseph Kony

When the UPDA, HSMF, and LA movements were defeated Joseph Kony replaced

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[193] Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and The Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda, 1986-1997*, 1.
[194] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 49.
[195] Ibid., 50.
[196] Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *African Affairs* 98, no. 390 (1999): 16–19, accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/723682.

them.[197] Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operated in Acholi land and recruited some of the former Acholi soldiers. Kony revitalized the HSMF and radicalized its teachings and methods. Initially Kony incorporated a strong religious component with apocalyptic tones into the movement. He focused on people's fear of ethnic extinction – the Acholi on whom the southern government imputed atrocities in Luwero Triangle.[198] However, the rituals associated with LRA portrayed it more as a cult than an organized armed group. The cult demanded formal initiation ceremonies including clubbing, stomping, and beating friends and family to death.[199] These rituals made LRA repulsive to the Acholi among whom Kony expected and later demanded support. Some Acholi began to distance themselves from LRA imputing evil to the whole movement. As Westbrook reports, "people saw in the LRA something of a schizophrenic or disjointed nature."[200] With support from the Acholi leaders dwindling Kony turned against his own Acholi people. The LRA strategy changed from ethnic mobilization to civilian victimization. According the Human Rights Watch report of 1997, the LRA atrocities spared no one including children who were abducted in tens of thousands. [201]

Museveni's government strategies further exposed the civilian population to Kony's murderous actions. Museveni's administration created the *Bow and Arrow Brigade* as a paramilitary group. This involved using Acholi militia equipped with bows and arrows to fight against the LRA rebels armed with machine guns. This government strategy had three fatal consequences: First, it was judged as contempt and intrigue against the Acholi people by

[197] *See* Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, eds., *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (New York, NY: Zed Books Limited, 2010). Also, Sverker Finnstrom, *Living With Bad Surroundings: War, History and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); .
[198] Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 22.
[199] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 54.
[200] David Westbrook, "The Torment of Northern Uganda: A Legacy of Missed Opportunities," *Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2 (June 2000): 5.
[201] Wasonga, "Conflict Trajectory in Northern Uganda: Its Development and Nature," 54.

Museveni's government. Second, it further turned LRA rebels against the Acholi civilians. And third the LRA construed it treasonous – an action of direct collaboration with the southern government from which the LRA sought to protect the Acholi.

Some scholars believe that this was a deliberate government plan to turn the Acholi against themselves and to deter unity among them. Furthermore, Museveni's government recruited children in the Local Defense Units as vigilantes. This strategy further reinforced Kony's indiscriminate massacre including children. According to Wasonga, Museveni's government tactics in the north created bad blood between the LRA and the local population, thereby destroying whatever popular support existed for the insurgents. In the end these strategies had little success in rooting out Kony's LRA, moreover with devastating effects. At the time I write this project Museveni's south-based government is as murderous, oppressive, corrupt, and violent against persons of other ethnic groups as Obote's and Idi Amin's regimes. The vicious cycles of ethnic ideology, exclusion, and violence continue.

1.3 Theological Implications and Conclusion

The main argument of this chapter is that the problem of Uganda's ethnic fragmentation from which ethnically motivated exclusion, grievances and violence emerge, lies in *processes* that reconstruct ethnic identities, polarize, and mobilize these identities into oppositional and competing configurations for sociopolitical and economic interests. I have shown that ethnic identities are not mere natural categories of distinction, but also fluid phenomena of identification within sociopolitical contexts. They have aspects of continuity and discontinuity, constants and variables, fixed and constructed. It has also become evident, as many scholars[202] of Uganda's

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[202] James K. Kigongo, "The Ethical Problem of National Unity in Post-Colonial Uganda," in *Uganda: A Century of Existence*, ed. P. Godfrey Okoth, Manuel Muranga, and Ernesto Okello Ogwang (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995), 76. *See also;* Wrigley, Christopher. "Four Steps Towards Disaster." In *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development*, edited by Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988;

political history have shown that the protracted ethno-political violence arises from the legacy of British colonialism that reified ethnic and regional loyalties; (re)constructed ethnic identities and imbued them with new meaning. Consequently, competing political and economic identities emerged as forms of colonial management of society. Differentiation or othering became a significant process that defined identity, access to power, and privilege in the new geopolitical entity. I have illustrated how contemporary governments not only replicate some colonial mechanisms of othering but also essentialize difference in the political and economic systems. Political elite wield ethnic ideology in political processes, use force and violence to gain and retain political power and privilege.

It has also become clear that ethnic or regional loyalties undergird oppressive regimes that secure privileged access to political power and economic privilege for a few members of their own group at the expense of others. Loyalty to one's ethnicity as the main center of interest clarifies the malaise of dictatorial rulers like Milton Obote, Id Amin, and (now) Museveni, who maintain power at all costs. While patronage and clientelism are pervasive features of these authoritarian regimes, these regimes violently crash the oppressed majority who try to resist injustices and claim their rights.

I have also highlighted that in contemporary Uganda what accounts for ethnic fragmentation is the deeply entrenched ethnic ideology (social narratives, discourses and representations) that engender inimical intergroup perceptions and interactions. It manifests itself in subtle but potent forms of stereotyping, biased nuances, resentment, and condescension against persons of other groups. Ethnic ideology not only carries powerful influence on human attitudes, but also actions in social relations. Within the political and economic order, it produces exclusion,

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Lwanga-Lunyiigo, Samwiri. *The Colonial Rots of Internal Conflict in Uganda*. Makerere University, Makerere Institute of Social Research, 1987.

nepotism, and preferential access to opportunity in public or government sectors. I have shown its diffusion, efficacy, and negative impact on society in the ethnically motivated violence.

I have also evinced that ethnic ideology does not only engender conflict of interests (in the political and economic), but also conflict of identities. It does not remain at the level of attitudes or ideas. It has materiality; it is constituted as 'embodied otherness" – the hated and dehumanized *other*! Even when there are no political or economic interests involved, conflict of identities endures; the *other* remains hated and dehumanized simply because she has been constructed as such. It is pervasive in human encounters, including faith-based interactions. That's why ethnic ideology precisely is an anthropological and theological problem. It constitutes a lie; it constructs a generalized false identity of persons of other ethnic groups. The 'other' is the object of hate – one to be avoided or eliminated.

Ethnic ideology is divisive in Christian communities. Christians in Uganda have too often succumbed to the dominant ethos of opposing and hostile identities in society. Within Christian communities Christians remain more strongly attached to 'ethnic camps' than to one community of faith. These ethnic camps are evident in seminaries, religious institutions of formation, communities, and houses. In a broader context, ethnic fragmentation constitutes divisions in the body of Christ. To reiterate this example, in the 1994 Rwanda genocide 'Tutsi' and 'Hutu' were not mere labels, but embodied difference and inimical forms of relation in Christian community and society. These identities were reconstructed in ways that obscured the *imago Dei*, Christian identity, and true humanity of the 'other.' Thus, ethnic ideology is a sin; it divides the ecclesial body. It also subverts the fact that diversity is an essential feature of God's creation and a fundamental composition of the body of Christ – Christ who calls members of his body from every ethnic group, race, language, and nation (cf Rev 7:9). It recasts human diversity in terms opposition and division, thus as a barrier to love and unity. This project presents a double challenge to the

people of God (religious, laity, and clergy); to interrogate their ethnic enclaves vis-à-vis Christian identity and unity, and also become agents of social reconciliation. Ethnic ideology, is a learned form of social conditioning; it can be un-learned through human transformation and new ways of socialization.

Chapter Two presents a Christian ethic that envisions a defusing of hostility, healing of past wounds, reconstructing identities, and promising reconciliation. As shown above, the fragility of inter-ethnic relations in Uganda can hardly sustain a national ethos that undergirds democratic processes, institutions, and a process of social reconciliation. Toppling of despotic regimes has not altered ethnically motivated exclusion, grievances, and violence. Change of governments has only swapped victims and oppressors. According to my analysis of Uganda's historical context, ethnic ideology remains the hermeneutical lens through which human identities of persons of other groups are often perceived and treated. I urge that in order to transform Uganda's society, it requires a discursive and dialectical approach that disrupts ethnic ideology. I will elaborate this approach in chapter three.

This chapter has raised critical ethical issues that a Christian ethic needs to address. The legacies of past ethnic violent conflicts that affect major identity levels – individual and communal.[203] Uganda's protracted cycles of ethnically motivated conflicts have emotional charge among members of ethnic groups who impute collective responsibility and culpability on *all* members of particular groups. Intergenerational identities of members of particular ethnic communities are constituted within the past criminal legacies of some of the members of their groups. It is against a crime-specific background that *all* members of a particular ethnic group are often consciously or unconsciously implicated – with a fundamental continuity. Chapter two poses

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[203] Nenad Dimitrijevic, *Duty to Respond: Mass Crimes, Denial and Collective Responsibility* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2011), 13.

these questions; How does Christian ethic in a context of mutual hatred, exclusion, and violence look like? How does a Christian understanding of truth, justice, love, and forgiveness inspire such an ethic?

CHAPTER TWO
 FACING THE PAST IN SEARCH OF TRANSFORMATION
2.0 INTRODUCTION

> "War is the mother of ignorance, isolation, and poverty… I say
> this as a daughter of war. We can't respond to violence with
> worse violence. In order to kill five violent men, we have to create
> ten violent men to kill them. This encourages the spiral of
> violence up and up. And the people are so exhausted because they
> do not know what's happening. It's like a dragon with seven
> heads. You cut one and two others come up."[204]
>
> *Sister Nazik Matty from Iraq*

In chapter one I argued that the problem of Uganda's ethnic fragmentation is essentially anthropological with sociopolitical and economic implications. It consists in the reconstruction of native identities into conflicting identities in the political and socioeconomic realities of the country. From the British colonial period ethnic identities were forged into identities of *difference* and *otherness*. I demonstrated that ethnic differentiation and exclusion became engrained in almost all human relations including interactions within faith relations. Christian people are not exempt from ethnic resentment against members of other groups within the same religious organization. Hence, ethnic difference became the underlying framework through which human identity is perceived and practices in human relations framed. Resentment based on ethnicity has had adverse effects in the sociopolitical and economic realities of the country. During decades of exclusion, oppression, and hostility Ugandans have witnessed acts of injustice that has claimed tens of thousands of victims. The fundamental question this chapter seeks to answer is; what kind of orientation does Uganda need to envision a reconciling society?

Therefore, this chapter establishes a Christian social ethic that facilitates the transformation

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[204] Eli Sasaran McCarthy editor, *A Just Peace Ethic Primer: Building Sustainable Peace and Breaking Cycles of Violence* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2020), 1.

of attitudes, practices, and social structures that alienate the 'other.' It precisely seeks the formation of persons and communities as disciples of Jesus to confront ethnic *differentiation* and to transform social structures in order assuage the suffering of victims of exclusion, resentment, and hostility. Hence, the Christian ethic I propose comprises of processes that facilitate the reconstruction of memory, rebuilding identity, promoting justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In effect, it aims at an imagination of a new Ugandan society in which mutual trust and respect, co-existence and acceptance are possible. As chapter three will elaborate this ethic is an expression of an incarnation mission of mercy, that is, the willingness to enter into the reality of the *other*, particularly the victim in order to transform it. In this sense, mercy as a concrete aspect of love, it seeks the transformation of persons, communities, and society toward an eschatological communion in God's Kingdom.

To begin with, this ethic is grounded on a literal and theological reading of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-48). My interpretation will show that for a Christian the Sermon is a resource for both character formation and moral action. It offers an orientation of the disposition of the heart and the transformation of practices in the way of following Jesus. In a sense, this ethic seeks a threefold orientation of the disciple of Jesus, that is, it considers *who* the disciple of Jesus as a moral agent ought to become. Second, *how* that quality of being affects her disposition toward the *other*. Third, *what* she ought to do to transform social relations. As alluded to above, chapter three will develop a spirituality of reconciliation with which a disciple ought to confront conflicted reality. Nevertheless, it will become evident that Matthew's Sermon reveals that becoming Jesus' disciple involves an all-embracing social ethic.

At the outset, I have to acknowledge that different scholars offer myriad ways of interpretations of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon is indeed a complex matrix of other teachings whose scope and depth are beyond this project. However, an ethical reading

(founded on a literal and theological interpretation) undeniably casts a foundational vision of who the disciple ought to be, and how she should live as a Christian in a conflicted context. It will be shown that the teachings of Jesus I have selected in the Sermon converge on love as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. In the next section, I undertake a modest analysis of specific texts that illustrate *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to become, *how* she ought to relate, and *what* she ought to do. These ethical demands should shape the whole way of life of the disciple.[205]

SECTION I: JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Matthew 5:17 – 48)[206]

2.2.1 Ethical Reading of Matthew 5:17-48 in the General Structure

The reading of the Sermon I propose reveals ethical themes that shape the kind of disciple of Jesus that Matthew envisions. From my reading of this part of the Sermon, it will become evident that according to Matthew Jesus is expanding and deepening the Mosaic Law. And that it is not sufficient for the disciple to mechanically fulfill the Torah to the letter, rather the interior transformation of the heart for the disciple is crucial.

Jonathan T. Pennington among other biblical scholars,[207] points out that Matthew's central section (5:17 – 48) consists of the famous "antitheses."[208] These teachings are typically called 'antitheses' by many scholars because of the seeming contrast or antithesis being made between

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[205] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 190.

[206] All citations in this project are taken from *The New American Bible* (New York: Benziger, PJ Kenedy, 1970).

[207] *See also* William D. Davies and Allison Jr. Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Vol. 1 International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988):504-571.

[208] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 198-328; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, [Rev. ed.].., Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007):273-351. Herman Hendrickx, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Revised Edition., Hendrickx, Herman Studies in the Synoptic Gospels (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 59–90; John Bligh, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Discussion on Mt 5-7* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1975), 75-114.

the teachings of Torah/Moses and Jesus.[209] The paradigmic phrases "You have heard that it was

said…*but* I say to you…" have often led scholars to interpret Jesus' teachings as contradictions of

the Torah. Pennington argues that this traditional title (antithesis) is understandable but misleading.

It deludes one to interpret the set of six examples (5:21-26, 27-30, 31-32, 33-37, 38-42, 43-48) as

contradictions to the Mosaic understanding of righteousness. Scholars who espouse an antithetical

interpretation interpret these examples as if Jesus is opposing the Mosaic law or even abrogating

it.

Biblical scholar Hans Dieter Betz points out that the term "antithesis" was first designated

by Marcion a second-century heretic, who gave the title to one of his works as a whole.[210] Marcion

believed the Sermon on the Mount to have come directly from Jesus. For Marcion the Sermon was

instrumental in establishing the separation between the god of the gospel from the god of the law

and the prophets. According to Marcion's reading of the Sermon, in these 'antitheses' Jesus had

decisively abolished the law and the prophets. For him, in the six antitheses or examples (5:21-48)

Jesus contrasts the Torah with his new teaching to show that the old and new are diametrically

opposed. Biblical scholars rightly argue against Marcion's erroneous interpretation. Betz suggests

that the 'antitheses' can be seen as rhetorical devices or figure of speech that have parallel formulae

from the rabbinic literature, which Jesus uses to make his point.[211] Within this rhetorical device

Jesus introduces his new expanded interpretation based on his theological insight into the original

intention of God.[212]

Moreover, in 5:17-19 Jesus precisely insists that he is *not* annulling the Mosaic Law. The

key word here is that Jesus has come to *fulfill* (πληρῶσαι) the Law. Betz argues that the term

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[209] Jonathan T Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 120.
[210] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 200.
[211] Ibid., 205.
[212] Ibid., 209.

"fulfill" is well chosen because in the six examples Jesus demonstrates that his interpretation facilitates the requirements of greater righteousness.[213] Righteousness is served when the law fulfills the purpose for which it was designed. It will become evident that for Jesus the purpose of the law is love of God and love of neighbor. In essence, this love fulfills all righteousness or justice. Betz explains that according to ancient theology, justice was above laws and even above Scripture. Justice was seen as a divine attribute. It derives from God's righteousness. Scripture and laws are its revelatory source.[214] The two terms [righteousness and justice] have been used interchangeably. In this sense, justice or righteousness must first be recognized through the general interpretation of Scripture, so that when the individual laws are applied they ought to serve justice. Later in the chapter, I expand and explain justice in terms of 'right relationship' – relationship between God and the human being, and between the human being and other fellow human beings. And that that relationship is ultimately expressed in love. In other words, the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, as I will later demonstrate converges on love of God and neighbor.

Pennington suggests that instead of thinking of Jesus' fulfillment of the law in 5:21-48 as a series of "antitheses", they are better called "exegeses" (deeper expositions).[215] In terms of their content, verse 20 states the ethical principles and eschatological goals Jesus presents in the Sermon on the Mount. This verse consists of an ethical demand that clearly defines the eschatological purpose, namely entering the kingdom of God. Consistent with Jewish ethics, Jesus' teaching focuses on the whole way of life of the disciple; but the purpose of such demands is primarily eschatological.[216] This is illustrated in the fact that central to Jesus' ethics is the concept of righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), a notion that plays an important role in the Beatitudes. This means that

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[213] Ibid., 179.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Jonathan T Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 121.
[216] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 190.

within the religious and ethical contexts of Jesus, the divine command of righteousness is the condition for anyone who wishes to enter the kingdom of God. Righteousness is aligned to obedience to the will of God as revealed in the Torah. The expression "your righteousness" (cf 5:20) shows that the Sermon speaks of a righteousness achieved through human action. Jesus' Torah interpretation provides the disciple with the means necessary for acquiring the righteousness demanded by God and for entering the Kingdom.

The general structure of this section (5:21-48) depicts the ethics of the Kingdom of God. There is consensus among biblical scholars that this section of the Sermon has six examples of Jesus' ethical teaching on greater righteousness. It is split into two triads 5:21-32 = (21-26, 27-30, 31-32) and 5:33-48 = (33-37, 38-42, 43-48).[217] Of the first group or triad, 5:21-26 discuss murder; 5:27-30 concerns adultery; and 5:31-32, divorce. The second group includes the section on perjury (5:33-37), retaliation (5:38-42), and the treatment of the enemy (5:43-48). Matthew gives some editorial clues how the first and second groups are split into two sets of three. First, in 5:33 Matthew uses the word *Πάλιν = palin* (again) as a marker between the third and fourth exegeses. *Πάλιν* serves as an "editorial dividing line" between the two triads that are nearly identical in length.[218]   Second, Matthew uses the full phrase, "*You have heard that it was said to your ancestors*" only in 5:21 and 5:33, that is, at the beginning of each triad.

Biblical scholars William Davis and Dale Allison note two other editorial clues which indicate that this section should be understood as a single unit. First, the six examples in 5:21-48 come after a general introduction of principles in 5:17-20. The introductory verse (5:20) announces what 5:21-48 is really all about, namely; the greater righteousness, a righteousness that should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Second, they also note that 5:47, at the end of the section

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[217] Davies and Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 504.
[218] Ibid.

returns to this theme of greater righteousness: "And if you greet your brothers/sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?[219] Hence, Matthew 5:17-48 contains a general introduction (5:17-20), followed by six examples (in 5:21-47) of the point being made in the introduction, and concluding with a summarizing statement (5:48).[220] All of this concerns the "greater righteousness" theme that is set forth in the introduction (5:17-20) and by which the disciple ought to be transformed. What does this greater righteousness look like? As I will elaborate, the righteousness Matthew speaks about is found in 5:48; "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." The heavenly Father is the source and end of all righteousness. In the next section, I illustrate the transforming ethics of Jesus' greater righteousness.

As mentioned at the beginning, each example illustrates *who* the disciple ought to become, *how* that quality of being affects her, and *what* the disciple ought to do. In a sense, the greater righteousness ought to transform the disciple to reflect the righteousness of the heavenly Father. All instances in the examples discuss *broken* relationships. The first example (5:21-26) concerns the broken relationships between "brothers," that is, members of the community; the second (5:27-30) and the third (5:31-32) the violation of the marriage taboo by adultery and by divorce. The second set of examples again focuses on broken relationships that involve; perjury (5:33-37), retaliation (5:38-42), and the enemy (5:43-48). Betz asserts that all the above examples are exemplifications of the love command in Leviticus 19:18.[221] This means that the love command guides Jesus' interpretation of the Torah. Hence, the love command inspires the reading of the Sermon for a holistic transformation of the disciple.

2.2.2 Ethics of Greater Righteousness: A Holistic Human Transformation

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[219] Dale C Allison Jr, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 182.
[220] Jonathan T Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 169.
[221] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 190.

Each of the two sections (5:21-32) and (5:33-48) comprises of a triad, three-part structure that point to greater righteousness. In each triad Jesus first gives the Torah statement, then an explanation of its intent, and the practical application. This basic pattern is generally maintained throughout this part of the Sermon. Christian ethicist Glenn Stassen recognizes the three-part structure but with a slightly different explanation. He asserts that Jesus first cites the traditional teaching, *then* gives a diagnosis of a vicious cycle that constitutes sin, *and then* offers a transforming initiative that describes the way of deliverance from sin.[222] I have selected four of the six examples (21-26, 27-30, 38-42, and 43-48) that directly relate to specific ethical issues this chapter addresses; namely the transformation of attitudes, practices, and social structures in a context of broken human relations.

2.2.2.1 On Murder (5:21-26)

Following the preface (5:17-20), Matthew 5:21-26 starts with reference to the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20:13) that prohibits the act of murder. Glenn Stassen notes that here Matthew affirms the *traditional piety*: "you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill…'" and that whoever kills is liable to judgment (5:21). Then Jesus offers a *diagnosis*, that the root cause of murder is anger also expressed in pejorative language: 'But I say to you, whoever is angry with his sister or brother … and whoever says to his brother or sister *raqa*…and whoever says 'you fool…*"* will face judgment (5:22). The third element of the triad is a *transforming initiative* that offers examples of reconciliation with one's adversary: "Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your sister or brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your sister or brother …" (5:23-24). Betz notes that in

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[222] Glen H. Stassen, "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-7:12)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122, no. 2 (2003): 267–308, accessed September 17, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3268446. *See* Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount*, Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013). 76n6

the context of the Sermon family ethics or expressions are to be taken in a metaphorical sense. The common usage of "brother," "sister" or "friend" refer to the members of the Christian community.[223] In this example, Matthew shows that Jesus requires that a disciple settles the issue with the opponent before they both reach court (5:25-26). Stassen asserts that Jesus places emphasis on the transforming initiatives by putting imperatives at the climax of the triad. In his interpretation, this means that the transforming initiative is an ethical imperative.[224]

Additionally, Matthew 5:21 refers to the ultimate consequence of broken relationship, that is, killing someone. The legal tradition Jesus cites stipulates that anyone who kills another must give accountability in court. According to the conventional corrective justice system of Jesus' time every crime received a proportionate punishment in a corresponding court of justice.[225] Biblical scholar Johan Thom interprets Jesus's teaching to mean that the problem underlying violence against another cannot be solved by a casuistic interpretation of the Law, which merely prescribes an appropriate punishment for the transgression. Rather, the solution lies in healing and restoring broken relationships.[226] Restoring broken relationship involves changing one's attitude toward one's adversary, as expressed in an act of reconciliation.

Hence, having a retributive justice system that prohibits and punishes cases of murder, does not necessarily deter people from committing murder. This may explain why Jesus goes beyond the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law to address the underlying causes of hostility, namely anger and the use of pejorative language against another. In other words, according to Matthew it is not sufficient for the disciple of Jesus not to commit the physical *act* of murder. One should also

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[223] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 205.
[224] Glen Harold Stassen, "Healing the Rift between the Sermon on the Mount and Christian Ethics," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 3 (December 1, 2005): 98, accessed September 18, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1177/095394680505880.
[225] Ibid., 98.
[226] Johan Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount: An Aristotelian Reading," *Novum Testamentum* 51, no. 4 (January 1, 2009): 328, accessed September 23, 2020, https://brill-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/view/journals.

go to the source and root out all anger that can cause acts of murder.[227] In this way the violent impulse to kill must be overcome by transforming one's inner disposition toward the adversary through acts of reconciliation.

Betz affirms that in 5:22 the change of emphasis from the act of murder to anger shows Jesus' shift from a casuistic criminal law to a moral law: That anger is morally reprehensible since it is the root cause of murder.[228] Hence, the mastery of a disposition of anger constitutes an ethical demand. This explains why Jesus prohibits outbursts of anger and bad language toward a sister or brother. Betz adds that the derogatory term '*raqa*' seems to have been commonly used in the bilingual culture of Palestine at the time of Jesus, as it frequently appears in rabbinic tradition.[229] And that, this use of the term was trivial and an everyday occurrence. Therefore, the suggested judgment and punishment for its use against someone, seem incommensurable with the trivial offense. For Betz, one ought not to take this interpretation in terms of criminal law. Rather one has to interpret this verbal abuse of a sister or brother as an insult to the love of God and neighbor.[230]

Thom further points out that in his teaching on anger (Matthew 5:25-26) Jesus provides little information to determine which of the two opponents in the legal dispute is the guilty one.[231] Betz suggests that there is likelihood that the conflict was mutual, since quite often grudges are, in which case verse 22 applies to both opponents.[232] Nevertheless, Jesus suggests that the legal dispute demands that the opponents settle the conflict while there is still opportunity regardless of who is guilty. It appears that Jesus's primary concern is the disciple's willingness to overcome

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[227] Davies and Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 509.
[228] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 219. Betz refers to the *Didache* 3.2, "Do not become angry, for anger leads to murder." In other words, what the Sermon leaves unstated, the Didache spells it out. The Didache articulates what the SM tacitly presupposes.
[229] Ibid., 220.
[230] Ibid., 222.
[231] Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount," 331.
[232] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 224.

resentment that causes the conflict. Hence, the disciple ought to form an attitude of goodwill towards the opponent.[233] Here, it becomes evident that the demands of Jesus' new ethic expand the traditional stipulations of the Mosaic Law that required appropriate action with little attention to one's inner disposition. The next example further demonstrates the length to which Jesus goes in order to illustrate his new transforming teaching.

Again, Thom explains that the scenario Jesus describes in Matthew 5:23-24 seems logistically improbable. For Thom, it was unlikely that someone who had probably walked for several days to the Temple in Jerusalem with a sacrificial animal to be offered, would leave the animal before the altar or with a temple guard, go all the way back home in order to be reconciled with a member of the community, before returning to the Temple to make the sacrificial offering. Thom suggests that Jesus uses hyperbolical illustrations to emphasize the importance of transforming one's attitude and the effort involved in healing broken relationships. It would appear that according to Matthew, the ending of conflict has utmost priority even over important ritual functions of worship. Rose Dowsett expresses this point differently. She states that "unresolved alienation from family or neighbor makes our worship unacceptable to God, because failure to be reconciled with others is an indication that we do not properly understand the grace of God in forgiving us."[234] The key ideal for Matthew is for Jesus' disciple to "first be reconciled."[235] In other words, when the neighborly relationship has been disrupted, the healing of this relationship must take precedence over offering of the gift.[236]

Betz affirms that according to sacrificial theology offering a gift to God is an expression of love toward God. Yet, according to the theology of the Sermon, love of God and love of

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[233] Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount," 331.
[234] Rose Dowsett, "Reconciliación as Reconstrucción of a Wounded and Unjust Society," in *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, vol. 16, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015), 105.
[235] Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount," 330.
[236] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 223.

neighbor must go together.[237] Going ahead with one's sacrifice without reconciling with one's brother or sister would in effect separate the love of God and the love of the sister; thus, it would contradict Jesus' central teaching on love (cf Mark 12:30-31; Matthew 22:37-40; Luke 10:27). The ethical attitude must be purified with love when one goes to offer the sacrifice. It would appear that even the difficulties and obstacles involved in the process of reconciliation are inconsequential. The example of traveling back to one's home in a far-off village shows that the Christian ethic requires extra effort to overcome any obstacles standing in the way of rebuilding broken human relationships. The illustration further shows that reconciliation comes at cost: It may mean facing dangers of walking for a day or two as the first century travel conditions might have been. This implies that reconciliation is hard. It also means that reconciliation comprises willingness to resist retaliatory attitudes in order to encounter one's opponent. Betz explains that Jesus' vision of the fulfilment of the law adds another aspect to the law. In order to fulfill the law, the disciple has to overcome the inner resistance toward the other.[238] That transformation constitutes the right inner quality of the disciple and the binding force of the Torah.

Therefore, according to Matthew Jesus offers a greater righteousness that provides practical ways of reestablishing broken relations. This involves transformation of one's attitude toward brother or sister and the resolve to do something about reestablishing right relationship. Matthew further underscores the importance of making friends with an opponent before going to court (5:25). Making friends with someone implies reconciliation.[239] The transition from foe to friend illustrates the effort required to transform hate into love. In other words, friendship implies a transformation of attitude toward one's adversary. In this ethical reading of the Sermon it can be

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[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid., 188.
[239] Ibid., 226.

observed that Jesus' teaching of greater righteousness involves not only right action, but also a right attitude. Transformation of attitudes and actions are fundamental qualities for becoming a disciple of Jesus. The goal is to have an attitude that gains control of anger and therefore rejects murder. Hence, it appears that for Jesus the original intent of God, the lawgiver is the transformation of inner quality of the disciple, which consequently inspires outward action. The next example shows a similar pattern of Jesus' teaching.

2.2.2.2 On Adultery (5:27-30)

Similarly, according to Matthew in 5:27 Jesus begins by affirming the Torah teaching prohibiting the act of adultery (cf Exodus 20:14; Deut 5:18). "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' Here, Jesus upholds the Mosaic Law. However, more than fulfilling the prohibition of the law, Jesus teaches a greater righteousness that instills holiness in his disciple. For Matthew, becoming Jesus' disciple requires more than a mechanical fulfillment of the Decalogue. In this exegesis/example Jesus makes a diagnosis of an inner disposition, which is the source of adultery, namely *lust*:[240] "But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew demonstrates that for Jesus it is not enough not to commit the physical act of adultery, rather the seed (lust) must be uprooted. Jesus' ethical imperative calls for more than literal compliance with the law. It calls for the elimination of the root cause of sin through the control of one's erotic desires.[241] The ethical interpretation redefines adultery shifting the emphasis from mere breaking of a taboo to the transformation of the predisposition of the heart.[242] In this case, the objectification of a woman as a means of erotic pleasure even in one's heart is gravely sinful. The greater righteousness demands that the disciple

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[240] Davies and Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 522.
[241] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 231.
[242] Ibid.

reflects God's attitude, which upholds the dignity of all persons since they are made in God's image. Hence, it becomes evident that in 5:27-30 Jesus at once maintains the Mosaic Law and supplements it with an inner quality of a disciple, namely, *who* the disciple ought to become. The disciple ought to reflect God's righteousness. Although verses 5:29 and 30 appear hyperbolical, there is vivid expression that this inner quality of being for a disciple involves some radical effort in order to avoid occasions of sin that disrupt right human relations as intended by God.

It is evident that according to Matthew in Jesus' new ethic interior human dispositions and attitudes have moral content. They can be right or wrong, blameworthy or praiseworthy. Hence, in order to overcome sin, one has to attend to inner sources of sin; thoughts and attitudes, that inspire human actions and ultimately shape personal character. Consistent with Jesus ethics in Matthew's Sermon, the gospel according to Mark echoes this intent of transforming interior dispositions. According to a literal reading of Mark 7:21-23, Jesus emphasizes that "From within people, from their hearts, come evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance and folly." "All these evils come from within and they defile." This indicates that Jesus' ethical teaching is holistic; it supplements prescriptions of external conduct with inner dispositions of the heart. It seeks to transform the whole person. Hence, for the disciple the fulfilment of the law and the prophets is actualized in the greater righteousness that reflects God's righteousness.

2.2.2.3 On non-retaliation (5:38-42)

As noted in the pattern above, Matthew 5:38-42 begins with the traditional formulation of retributive justice: "You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth;" this is the traditional *ius talionis* or law/principle of retaliation.[243] New Testament scholar Dorothy Jean

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[243] Gerald W. Schlabach, "A 'Manual' for Escaping Our Vicious Cycles: Practical Guidance from the Sermon on the Mount for a Just Peace Ethic," in *A Just Peace Ethic Primer: Building Sustainable Peace and Breaking Cycles of*

Weaver notes that from an historical perspective, this law was neither unique to the Jewish people nor originates from them.[244] According to her, its origins reach far back in antiquity among the ancient Near East societies to legal formulations governing 'intertribal' relations of nomadic people. From the Code of Hammurabi and the Middle Assyrian Laws to Greek, Roman, and Jewish legal formulations – both scriptural and rabbinic there is evidence that points to the widespread use of the *lex/ius talionis* in the ancient world.[245] Christian ethicist Eli Sasaran McCarthy argues that the historical rationale of *ius talionis* was to keep punishment in direct proportion to the transgression committed. And that it was an improvement over the ancient code of Lamech that stipulated a seventy-seven-fold retaliation against any harm; exponentially amplifying Cain's declaration of a sevenfold revenge (cf Genesis 4:15, 23-24).[246]

Hans Dieter Betz explains that the *ius talionis* was a preventative measure against such excessive revenge.[247] The *talio*[248] principle, according to him was meant to foster an underlying sense of proportional retributive justice. It replaced an older system of indiscriminate and endless cycles of blood revenge. This principle demanded that retributive justice should no longer be achieved by excessive rage against one's enemy, but by proportional punishment of the offender or by substitutional compensation.[249] He further points out that the Sermon omits the traditional excess of 'life for life,' as found in Exodus 21:23 and Deuteronomy 19:21. For Betz this omission suggests that in the Sermon Jesus is less concerned with murder *per se*, but with the prohibition of

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Violence, ed. Eli S. McCarthy (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2020), 18.

[244] Dorothy Jean Weaver, "Transforming Nonresistance: From ' Lex Talionis' to 'Do Not Resist the Evil One'," in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Willard M. Swartley, Studies in Peace and Scripture (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 37.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Eli Sasaran McCarthy editor, *A Just Peace Ethic Primer*, 18.

[247] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 278.

[248] Ibid., 275. Betz notes that the principle belongs to the most ancient stock of legal rules in Western culture. The original *talio* principle is unknown, as is the etymology of the Latin word *talio* itself, the name by which the principle was known in antiquity.

[249] Ibid., 276.

violent attacks of all forms against another.[250] According to him the Sermon reflects the virtues in the Beatitudes; especially meekness (5:5) peacemaking (5:9) and reconciliation as shown in 5:21-26.

In addition to granting the offended party a right to proportionally retaliate, the traditional view expected people to treat others as they deserve: friends as friends and enemies as enemies (5:43).[251] For instance in the teaching; "love your neighbor (cf Leviticus 19:18), there is an expectation that one gave precedence to fellow members of one's group or nation over outsiders.[252] According to Matthew Jesus offers a new ethic to his disciples that transforms the old retaliatory mentality. There are four brief scenes in 5:39-42 that show how a disciple ought to respond when she is; (1) personally insulted, (2) taken to court, (3) coerced to do a soldier's service, or (4) asked to help someone in need of funds.[253] The response of the disciple in these scenarios ought to reflect the righteousness of God in acting with love as the fundamental stance of the disciple.

Again, in 5:38-42 Matthew offers a way by which Jesus' disciples ought to respond to aggressive persons.[254] Consistent with Jesus' teaching on non-retaliation Betz renders verse 5:39a: "But I tell you not to *retaliate* against the evildoer," instead of "…do not *resist* the evildoer" as often translated. In a sense, this verse points to the course of action the disciple ought to take when injured. Here Jesus is unequivocally prohibiting retaliation. The main focus is not to "return evil with evil." [255] Retaliatory actions are irreconcilable with Jesus' ethic. It is important to emphasize that Jesus' teaching against retaliation does not condone defeatism in the face of evil or resignation to all kinds of villains. Rather, it aims at defusing a victim's inclination to revenge and fostering

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[250] Ibid., 278.
[251] Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount," 333.
[252] Eli Sasaran McCarthy editor, *A Just Peace Ethic Primer*, 18.
[253] Davies and Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 522.
[254] Thom, "Justice in the Sermon on the Mount," 331.
[255] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 281.

nonviolent means in resisting evil.[256] Luise Schottroff also argues that if one considers complete submission to injustice and evil done by another, the love of one's enemy as taught by Jesus (5:44-45) becomes inexplicably impossible. For her, the two injunctions; love of one's enemy and non-violent resistance to evil go hand in hand. She explains that love of one's enemy demands resisting the evil the enemy does; the evil that dehumanizes both victim and offender. For her, loving one's enemy while surrendering to injustice, can hardly be called love.[257] Hence, love demands resisting evil with non-violent means and thus transforming the condition of victim and wrongdoer.

Jesus himself exemplified non-retaliation by non-violent means to hostility. During his arrest, according to Matthew 26:52 Jesus ordered Peter who was prepared to fight their adversaries with violence: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." Moreover, Jesus' teaching of non-retaliation is echoed throughout the New Testament. For instance, in Romans 12:21 Paul teaches: "Don't be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."[258] Similarly, the theme of returning good for evil using good means and not evil ones can be found in Luke 6:27-36, 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and 1 Peter 2:23.[259]

It becomes evident that in Matthew 5:38-42 Jesus offers transforming initiatives of restoring right relation and liberation from cycles of hostility. Jesus expands the prescriptions of the Law in order to eradicate cycles of retaliatory violence encapsulated in "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."[260] It appears that although an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth…was a measure of justice, it could still perpetuate cycles of violence without measure. This explains why

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[256] Ibid., 284.
[257] Luise Schottroff, "Non-Violence and the Love of One's Enemies," in *Essays on the Love Commandment*, trans. Ilse Fuller and Reginald H. Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 25-26.
[258] Dale C Jr Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels," *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1982): 5, accessed September 18, 2020, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx.
[259] Stassen, "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5," 281–82.
[260] Schlabach, "A 'Manual' for Escaping Our Vicious Cycles: Practical Guidance from the Sermon on the Mount for a Just Peace Ethic," 18.

Jesus' transforming initiative in Matthew 5:39a prohibits one's given right to strike back with the same means of violence. Allison and Davis suggest a reading of Matthew 5:39 within the context of Deut 32:35 "Vengeance is mine and recompense…;" Prov 20:22; "Do not say, 'I will repay evil!' Wait for the Lord, who will help you," Prov 24:29 "Do not say, 'As they did to me, so will I do to them; I will repay them according to their deeds.' Allison and Davis also suggest that the spirit in the beatitudes underlies the attitude of the disciple in 5:39-42.[261] That is to say, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, and those who are happy to suffer for a righteous cause cannot strike back at their opponent with the same means of violence.

In focusing on restoring broken relationships by transforming attitudes and practices, Jesus' ethic does not abandon the demands of justice for the offender. Here, it is important to highlight the understanding of justice that situates Jesus' ethic within a broader concept of biblical justice, as I will later elaborate. Here it suffices to say that biblical justice is a complex notion, broadly understood as the restoration of relational bonds and liberation from any form of bondage.[262] The reestablishment of relations with non-violent means in fact installs relational justice. Restoring human relations also liberates those enslaved by a spirit of vengeance and all other forms of injustice that arise from the nature of conflicted human relations. This understanding of justice may even require abandoning strict adherence to claims of being right and deserts, prescribed by systems of retributive justice. Hence, the fulfillment of the requirements of justice is achieved in the love command that restores right relationships.

It therefore becomes evident that mere stipulation of actions by law does not sufficiently extricate persons and communities from cycles of retaliatory resentment and hostility. For

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[261] Davies and Dale C, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 541.
[262] David Hollenbach, "The Politics of Justice," *Theology Today* 38, no. 4 (1982): 489, accessed January 4, 2021, https://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost.

instance, "An eye for an eye, can easily escalate into an endless cycle of reprisal, despite the best efforts to aptly apply the *lex talionis*.[263] According to the reading of the Sermon I suggested, violence may not be eradicated by 'correcting' the offense with an appropriate action, rather by also attending to the root causes of broken relations. Jesus's ethic is holistic; it is concerned with who the disciple becomes that inspires right actions. That quality of being shapes right attitudes and ultimately human character. Hence, vengeance, pride, and anger must be mastered in the disciple's heart, and countered by acts of reconciliation with one's adversaries.

2.2.2.4 On Love of Enemy (5:43-48)

Matthew 5:43-48 begins with a traditionally known teaching "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." 5:43 refers back to Leviticus 19:18. As pointed out above the traditional view expected people to treat others as they deserve: friends as friends and enemies as enemies. Betz points out that the phrase "…and hate your enemy" is not found in Old Testament or Rabbinic literature. Rather, it reflects a common human behavior.[264] In fact Exodus 23:4-5 recommends helping the enemy's ox or ass if they are in trouble. In Matthew 5:44-45 Jesus expands that mindset of Leviticus 19:18 and explicitly commands the love of one's enemies. He gives a theological reason for his interpretation of verse 44 in verse 45: "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (5:44), so that you may be sons and daughters of your Father in heaven… (5:45)." Again, a reflection of God's attitude is shown here in the love the disciple ought to have even for her adversaries.   Hence, the appropriation of God's attitude to the disciple's way of life, render her a daughter of God and thus reflect God's very nature.

Stassen notes that in 5:46-48 Jesus challenges his disciples to consider the implications of

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[263] Eli Sasaran McCarthy editor, *A Just Peace Ethic Primer*, 19.
[264] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 306.

loving one's friends only: "If you love those who love you, what reward have you...?" In other words, if one loves *only* those who love her, her righteousness does not exceed the traditional mentality that closes a person within a limited circle of relations.[265] Then Jesus opens the disciple to an unlimited environment of relations unconditioned either by kinship, friendship or enmity. He offers a transforming initiative: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). This means that one ought to love everyone including one's enemies as God loves and cares for everyone in making "his sun rise on the good and the bad…" (5:43). For the disciple, the love command (Leviticus 19:18) is the binding force of all ethical norms. In this way Jesus's disciple can express a greater righteousness that does not exclude one's adversary. Here Jesus' teaching is not merely a high-minded ideal, but a practical *way* of liberation from the limitations imposed by an exclusionary mentality.

Hence, Jesus climaxes his new ethic with a positive proclamation that the disciple ought to be perfect as the heavenly Father (5:48). I will return to this verse at end of this section to illustrate its centrality to being Jesus' disciple. Nevertheless, Stassen explains that Jesus' call for perfection should not be understood to mean living up to an ideal of moral perfection, as if God lives up to such an ideal. Rather, it refers to God's creative care for the just, and unjust, giving sunshine and rain to all – deserving and undeserving.[266] This means that Jesus' disciples ought to practice God's all-inclusive love toward all people, just as God does. In this sense, Jesus' disciples ought to practice a moral life that looks beyond the claims of conventional systems of retributive justice and the limited mindset of one's culture, tradition, kinship, and community. It demands transformation of one's attitude and following God's example by loving all people without setting boundaries (cf 5:44-45,48). Hence, being Jesus' disciple is a quality of being that inspires good

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[265] Stassen, "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5," 282.
[266] Ibid.

attitude and actions.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the centrality of verse 5:48. This verse is significant because it serves double duty; as the end of the sixth exegesis/antithesis (5:43-48) and even more as the conclusion to the entire section (5:17-48). The main point is that, 5:48 expresses the essence of the greater righteousness set out in 5:17-20. This theme has been illustrated in the four out of the six examples (5:21-26, 27-30, 31-32, 33-37, 38-42, 43-48) I have analyzed. Verse 5:48 is the focal point of all the six examples. Its centrality precisely involves the quality of being of Jesus' disciple that requires the holistic personal transformation that ultimately reflects God's love.[267] In other words, being like the heavenly Father is the hallmark of being Jesus' disciple. This quality of being defines *who* the disciples is, it inspires *how* the disciple ought to relate to the other, and it guides *what* she ought to do in social relations.

Finally, verse 5:48 points to the kind of transformation that Jesus s requires to enter the kingdom of heaven. 5:48 serves as the bookend of 5:17-20, saying in other terms the same thing, that all righteousness ought to be God's righteousness. The verse illustrates the ultimate definition of what a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees looks like; being like God who loves all regardless of any condition. In contexts of ethnically motivated exclusion like Uganda where hostility and retaliation are normalized in the sociopolitical and economic realities, Jesus' teaching has significant ethical implications for Christians. Jesus' new ethic offers a vision that can recalibrate attitudes, practices, and social structures in order to extricate persons and communities from cycles of exclusion.

2.2.3 Ethical Implications of Sermon on Human Broken Relations

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[267] Jonathan T Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, 78.

As demonstrated above, the reading of the Sermon I have chosen focuses on *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be, *how* that quality of being affects her disposition to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do in her relations. In other words, this ethic casts a foundational vision of how the disciple ought to be and the implications of her living in a conflicted society. It precisely envisions the transformation of attitudes, practices and social structures that destroy human identity and relations. In effect, its implications are threefold: (1) it attends to the anthropological dimension of human identity and relation as articulated in chapter one. It fosters the change of attitudes resentment toward the other, and reconstruction of personal and social relations that undergird ethnic exclusion. In other words, the kind of person the disciple becomes (by reflecting God's love for all) necessarily overcomes hostility against the 'other.' (2) This ethic challenges not only persons but also entire groups/communities to break out of exclusionary attitudes and practices that reinforce injustice in order to open themselves to a wider context of relations. In other words, the ethic fosters communities of love, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. This also implies that (3) the disciples of Jesus (persons and groups) ought to forge ways that eradicate nationwide social structures that promote oppression of the vulnerable. In short, this ethic has implications for three interrelated levels; persons, ethnic groups, and the nation.

The first implication means that the disciples of Jesus ought to overcome of ethnic resentment in her heart. My reading of Matthew has illustrated that for Jesus, it is not enough *not* to kill; but we must strive to overcome our attitude of resentment and the use of pejorative language against one another." Applied to a context of ethnic hostility, Jesus' teaching challenges attitudes of anger and the use of contemptuous language against persons of other groups. In situations of widespread hostility, pejorative language is not mere rhetorical expression, rather it often is a form of dehumanization. William A. Donohue a scholar in conflict management argues that negative language can "degenerate into the reification of a culture that tolerates and even encourages

dehumanizing acts."[268] For instance, the term 'cockroach,' a slur used by the Nazi against Jews in the *Shoah*, and Hutu extremists against Tutsi in the Rwanda genocide was a form of dehumanization. In a manner of speaking, mass killings are often preceded by dehumanizing language and representations that vilify the enemy in "less than human" images. Gregory H. Stanton, a researcher in genocide studies and prevention, highlights this point. In his analysis of genocidal processes, he highlights eight stages that need to be identified in order to prevent acts of mass violence.[269] The first three stages depict a steady down spiral of social conditions that often begin with the classification ("us" versus "them"), then symbolization (groups being given particular labels or negative stereotypes) and then dehumanization (the enemy is given specific names of animals or likened to a disease for instance, cockroaches, snakes or cancer) before they are potentially eliminated.[270] In the first chapter I described this phenomenon as the process of *othering* or *differentiation* that reifies negatively constructed identities.

In Uganda, stereotyping among ethnic groups became embedded within the country's political history from the beginning of the British colonial 'divide and rule' policy to the present. These stereotypes accompanied the reconstruction of ethnic identities not only as political categories, but also as identities of *difference* and *otherness*. Stereotypical labels like, primitive versus modern, aliens versus natives, uncivilized versus civilized, oppressors and oppressed, backward-north versus developed-south … became normalized ways of referring to certain groups by others.[271] Most importantly, underlying these seemingly trivial expressions is often embedded deep ethnic resentment. Indeed, ethnic prejudice abounds in pejorative expressions. Negative

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[268] William Donohue, "The Identity Trap: The Language of Genocide," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology - J Lang Soc Psychol* 31 (March 1, 2012): 13.
[269] Gregory H. Stanton, "Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?" *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 213–17, accessed November 15, 2020, https://doi.org/.
[270] Donohue, "The Identity Trap," 14.
[271] Justus Nil Gaju, "Stereotypes as Sources of Conflict in Uganda.," *University of Texas Collection* (2005): 1.

rhetoric, narratives, and images play a significant role in labelling the other as an objectionable and loathed outsider. Widespread verbal dehumanization can deteriorate into the elimination of the 'less than human' other. Again, according to Stanton, these stages solidify negative group identity from which persons and groups find it hard to escape.[272] This means that people can get caught up in dehumanizing social attitudes, verbal expressions, and practices that eventually become hard to notice, challenge, resist or even change. He argues that recognizing the first three stages is crucial to preventing a hostile social environment. For Donohue understanding the power of dehumanizing language in public discourse is one of the fundamental ways of preventing mass violence.[273] Use of negative language can create polarized identities aimed at separating in-group and out-group persons. These insights highlight the importance of taking seriously Jesus' teaching on anger, resentment, and derogatory language in sociopolitical contexts.

The second implication is related to *how* the disciple of Jesus ought to live in society. In addition to the transformation of attitudes, the reading of the Sermon I have undertaken suggests *action-oriented* transforming initiatives that have the potential to inspire communities of love, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. As shown above, leaving one's gift before the altar and returning to one's home in order to reconcile with another, even if understood only hyperbolically conveys an imagination of the difficulty of the task of reconstructing broken relationships. Stassen points out that Jesus's transforming initiatives are not mere high-sounding ideals that simply need to be admired, but rather practical ways of deliverance from vicious cycles of sin, and actual breakthroughs of the reign of God in concrete reality.[274] Hence, this ethic is practical. The practices it implies may even require persons and communities to recognize and *unlearn* certain commonly

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[272] Stanton, "Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?" 213.
[273] Donohue, "The Identity Trap," 14.
[274] Glen H. Stassen, "Transforming Initiatives of Just Peacemaking Based on the Triadic Structure of the Sermon on the Mount - Google Search," 1, accessed November 15, 2020, https://www.google.com/search.

accepted social attitudes and practices that espouse exclusion and injustice in society.

Third, being Jesus disciple sets demands on persons and communities toward the wider society. The disciples ought to forge ways of eradicating structures that promote exclusion and oppression. The central focus of Jesus' teaching is the love command. God's love is expressed in the love of neighbor including one's enemies. The disciple ought to embody the heavenly Father's love. The love command inspires the disciple to transform any barriers that stand in the way of establishing right relation. This is because God's love, which the disciple reflects, knows no boundaries. As such, Jesus' ethic illustrates the nature of biblical justice.

As mentioned above, justice in the bible is a complex notion. The term "justice" is used with different meaning in the bible. Nevertheless, its foundation is the being of God, for whom it is a chief attribute.[275] Justice in the bible, as an expression of God's righteousness and love is focused on the oppressed with specific attention given to specific groups; the poor, widows, the fatherless, slaves, resident aliens, and those with infirmities.[276] Since justice is an attribute of God, God guarantees the defense of the poor and the oppressed (Jer 9:23-24; Ps 10:17-18). Subsequently the justice of God, characterized by God's special care for the poor and the weak, demands a corresponding quality for God's people (Deut 10:18-19). In other words, when God's people properly carryout justice, they become God's agents *par excellence* and doers of the divine will (Isaiah 59:15-16). As such, Paul presents justice as God's grace flowing through believers to the needy (2 Cor 9:8-10).

The divine demand for justice in the bible is so central that other responses to God are empty if one fails to fulfill the requirements of justice (Amos 5:21-24); Micah 6:6-8; Matt 23:23). Justice is demanded of all people, most especially the political authorities (Jer. 21:11-12; Isaiah

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[275] Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st Edition. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 519.
[276] Ibid.

1:10, 17). Hence, doing justice for God's people is a reflection of God's love and grace (Deut 10:18-19; Hos 10:12) that provides vindication and deliverance for victims, and the creation of community.[277] David Hollenbach points out that biblical justice involves "a *relational* bond that links persons together in a community of mutual responsibility and mutual rights."[278] If justice is a mutually enriching relational bond that links persons in community, it is also necessarily a liberating force to those who are marginalized, oppressed, and disenfranchised by division or exclusion. Hence, the demand for justice lays a duty on the disciples of Jesus to eradicate social structures of injustice.

Biblical justice seeks to embrace the victim in one communal bond, thus eliminating the injustice of exclusion. In other words, exclusion of a sister or brother is contrary to God's justice. As such, justice reflects the love command, which is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. It means that the love command stands as a critique to any attitudes, practices, and structures that create divisions and inequality among persons and groups. Since justice is deliverance of the vulnerable, in rectifying the gross inequalities of the disadvantaged (Ps 76:9), it must try to put an end to the conditions (attitudes, practices, and structures) that produce the injustice (Ps 10:18). In other words, in accordance with God's justice the victims are raised and the oppressors are judged.[279] The Christian disciple has a calling for the transformation of a wider society. The following section therefore demonstrates what this Christian vocation for social transformation involves.

SECTION II: THE SERMON AND ITS TRANSFORMING INITIATIVES: ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

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[277] Ibid.
[278] Hollenbach, "The Politics of Justice," 489.
[279] Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 520.

The Christian ethic I develop in Sermon on the Mount intends to shape the transformation of attitudes and practices that undergird the functioning of human relations and social structures. In my analysis, a process of social reconciliation in Uganda hinges on the transformation of these three aspects, namely, attitudes, practices, and social structures. In this section I argue that the transformation of these three aspects pivots on five key interrelated components: Memory, identity, truth, justice, and forgiveness.

2.3.1 Collective Memory and Transformation of Identity

One of the conditions that affect human relations is negative attitudes and perceptions toward the *other* that arise from negative memory. Theologian Robert Schreiter states that "memory is the basis of identity" – it is about the relationship between people and things remembered from the past and their significance in the presence.[280] Collective memory comprises experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and practices of a particular group handed down generations.[281] It means that collective memory shapes a group's self-understanding, its values, shapes behavior and influences the interpretation of reality, especially perceptions of persons of other groups. Insofar as memory defines a group's self-understanding, it constitutes the group's identity. Scholars like Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger have articulated the relation between memory and identity, particularly how the construction of a common past can redefine a people in relation to that past.[282] Others like Jacques Roumani, and Judith Roumani,[283] highlight how memories of violent events are powerful in fomenting negative attitudes and

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[280] Robert J. Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35, no. 2 (April 2008): 112.
[281] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 126, accessed January 12, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/488538.
[282] Eric Langenbacher, William John Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger, *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012):2.
[283] Jacques Roumani, Judith Roumani, and David Meghnagi, eds., *Jewish Libya: Memory and Identity in Text and Image*, Modern Jewish History (Syracuse University Press, 2018).

identities of persons that evoke such memories.[284] In violent contexts, traumatic memories often remain untamed and uncontrolled.[285] Hence, negative experiences facilitate the way negative identities of other persons are constructed. These attitudes are influential in personal and social relations. This is evident not only in Uganda but also in contexts of long-term conflicts such as in the Middle East, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, among others, where ethnic identities become political identities.[286] This also implies that if identity is constituted by memory, insofar as a group reinterprets past experiences, the identity of persons defined by those experiences can also be reconstructed over time as narratives of the past evolve.

Robert J. Schreiter argues that "violence tries to destroy the narratives that sustain people's identities and substitutes narratives of its own."[287] The substitute narratives that violence tries to create, is what Schreiter calls "narratives of the lie," precisely because "they negate people's true narratives." This implies that as long as people's relation is constituted by negative experiences between them, the identity of the other will often remain negative. The true identity of persons of other groups will always remain obscured by the negative memory. Schreiter's insight is significant for Uganda's reconstruction of collective memory, narrative, and identity.

As I pointed out in chapter one, the history of exclusion, victimization, and hostility that constitutes ethnic political realities in Uganda often evokes such negative memories and perceptions of members of those ethnic groups to which former leaders (for instance, Milton Obote and Idi Amin) who committed crimes against members of other groups belong. The adversarial

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[284] David Meghnagi, "Libyan Jews: Between Memory and History," in *Jewish Libya: Memory and Identity in Text and Image*, ed. Jacques Roumani, Judith Roumani, and David Meghnagi (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 277–78.

[285] Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," 112.

[286] Eran Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution," *Emotion Review* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 68, accessed December 13, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073913491844.

[287] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, vol. 3, Boston Theological Institute Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 34.

perception is attributed to members of those groups by association. Eran Halperin points out that the enemy is often *always* [emphasis added] perceived in exclusively negative images.[288] These (enemy) attitudes and identities are reified in the social, political, and even religious relations. This means that what appears as political or economic conflict, is essentially a conflict of identities. In order to transform these negative attitudes, past experiences require new ways of remembering and reconstruction of identities. I argue that in a process of collective remembering the reconstruction of memory can happen. This means that the exclusive sense of victimization propagated within in-group ethnic narratives, perceptions, and interpretations can be reevaluated within a broader context across ethnic groups. In the next section I demonstrate how the sharing of narratives can reconstitute collective memory, transform the identity of the other, and forge a national identity.

2.3.1.1 Collective Remembering

As pointed out above, memory constitutes identity. In Uganda each ethnic group often maintains narratives of its own victimization, that is, its own collective memory of others. There are as many narratives as there are ethnic groups. For instance, ethnic groups in the south especially Buganda victimized by Id Amin's reign of terror and Milton Obote's regimes of blood maintain narratives of victimization that are not shared by ethnic groups in the north during those regimes. Similarly, ethnic groups in north especially the Acholi and Langi have their own narratives of victimization during the National Resistance Movement war against the Lord's Resistance Army, unknown to most people in the south. Again, as chapter one illustrated, due to the north-south divide national ties between these regions are almost non-existent; the country is fragmented alone ethnic lines. This explains why the overthrow on one regime, often means the beginning of

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[288] Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution," 69.

oppression for other groups. This further explains the armed rebellion of the northern ethnic groups after the overthrow of Milton Obote's second regime. In 1986 pro-Obote militias and former Amin soldiers regrouped in the north and launched attacks on the newly created government early that year.[289] Likewise, in 1987 the insurgency in northern Uganda was a reaction against the newly created south-based government. Chapter one gave examples of some of the atrocities that were committed against people in the north in what was interpreted as a revenge attack for the crimes committed in Luwero Triangle.

The foregoing demonstrates that the nature of ethnic fragmentation in Uganda creates clusters of victims and oppressors at different periods and regimes in the country's political history. The notorious legacies of former regimes survive in narratives of each group. As Michael Schudson affirms, the persistence and intensity of memories depends on the power of a traumatic past.[290] Nevertheless, although narratives vary in detail from one group to another and from regime to regime the sense of victimization based on ethnic resentment, exclusion, and oppression is a common denominator. What is missing is a national conversation about this malady and the collective atrocities it has wrought in the country's sociopolitical history. Negative memories live on among members of different groups. Nevertheless, these memories are not static, they can be reconstructed in new ways that facilitate healing.

Social psychologist Patrick Devine-Wright affirms that when in-group members socially reconstruct an historical event over time, interpretations of such occurrences and attributions of judgements of blame and responsibility are open to modifications.[291] Similarly, French philosopher

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[289] Susanne Buckley-Zistel, *Conflict Transformation and Social Change in Uganda: Remembering After Violence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 66.

[290] Michael Schudson, "Dynamics of Distortion in Collective Memory," in *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past*, ed. Daniel L. Schacter and Joseph T. Coyle (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 346–7.

[291] Patrick Devine-Wright, "A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 10.

and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argues that memories change with time, and that "what becomes fixed in memory are not just facts, but attitudes."[292] As generations pass on memories, these (memories) become what Halbwachs calls "reconstructed remembrances."[293] This means that the content of memory is not so much the facts of the events, but the interpretations of those events with regard to their significance to the present conditions. Those events are constructed and reconstructed as current conditions change or suit the group members.[294] A group(s) left with a sense of victimhood, unacknowledged and unresolved losses have potential of breaking out into retaliatory violence. This in turn reifies a sociopolitical culture that normalizes cycles of hostility.

During one of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission conferences, Chilean lawyer José Zalaquett stated that "victims remember themselves as 'the victimized."[295] As such, victims need a wider context and safe space to express themselves, recognize their grievances, and attend to the negative legacy that keeps them captive to resentment. Zalaquett affirms that unconstrained telling of experiences by victims is crucial to both collective memory and healing.[296] As the victims are granted a safe space to express their grievances and stories, this process has the potential of liberating them from the untold experience of suffering. Relating events and experiences in conversations can help the change of attitudes toward the other. When groups engage in conversations about past experiences, interpretations of events can be transformed. In fact, new generations may have greater potential of reinterpreting the past in new ways, since they are a step removed from the trauma that accompanies the direct experience of

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[292] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, Harper Colophon Books; CN/800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 64.
[293] Ibid., 68.
[294] Devine-Wright, "A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict," 16.
[295] Quoted in Antjie Krog, "The South African Road," in *The Healing of a Nation?* ed. Alex Boraine and Janet Levy (Cape Town: Justice in Transition, 1995), 115.
[296] Jose Zalaquett, "Commission of Truth and Reconciliation: Chile," in *The Healing of a Nation?* ed. Alex Boraine and Janet Levy (Cape Town: Justice in Transition, 1995):46.

negative events.

Edward Cairns and Michael D. Roe argue that in ethnically motivated violence, social memories do not remain static; they evolve over time.[297] Each generation interprets the past according to current experiences, expectations, and needs. Although members of the vanquished often keep negative memories about their victimizers if injustices persist, these memories are subject to modification as conditions of oppression change with time. These memories, to use Gonzalo Gamio Gehri's phrase are, "pasts that do not pass,"[298] but have the potential of being reconstructed in new ways.

While the positive reconstruction of narratives is not guaranteed, in these conversations different ways of remembering and forgetting can be achieved. Telling of one's story is "a living and interactive process through which new ways of engaging and being with one another are born."[299] That is, there can arise a new way of perceiving the other. Sharing stories can have a great positive impact on persons and communities when participants allow their stories to be shattered and then transformed by the story of the other. The other's story has the potential of dismantling one's perception of them, thus effecting a positive image of them. It can shatter stereotypes, assumptions, and ideas that sustain the divisions between them. If this happens, a transformation of attitudes may begin to occur between them. Most importantly, is the transforming power of the victims' stories about their suffering at the hands of the perpetrators. David Middleton and Derek Edwards[300] affirm the constructive potential of a conversational

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[297] Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe, "Introduction: Why Memories in Conflict?," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Ed Cairns and Mícheál D. Roe (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7.

[298] Gonzalo Gehri Gehri, "Catholicism and the Struggle for Memory: Reflections on Peru," in *Democracy, Culture, Catholicism: Voices from Four Continents*, ed. Michael Schuck and John Crowley-Buck, First Edition. (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), 178.

[299] Cori Wielenga, "Shattered Stories: Healing and Reconciliaion in the South African Context," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): 1.

[300] Derek Edwards and David Middleton, "Conversation and Remembering: Bartlett Revisited," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 1 (1987): 77–92 at 79.

discourse as a process of remembering and forgetting. They argue that accuracy of remembering is unimportant. What is important is how different versions of past events are reconstructed in conversation and what the participants in these interactions accomplish.

Antjie Krog however, challenges Middleton's and Edward's idea of disregarding the accuracy of remembering. She argues that when narratives consist of false or half memories they easily lead to committing further atrocities.[301] Although Krog's observation is important for the need of 'right remembering,' after decades of mutual exclusion and hostility with few available records of crimes and perpetrators, accuracy of information might be unattainable. Much of what she calls memories, may actually be interpretations or different versions of events held in narratives of survivors and families of victims or what Halbwachs calls "reconstructed remembrances." Nevertheless, victims and their families need space to tell their stories *as* they remember the events. Steve Stern argues that memory reconstruction is a dialectical process; it involves an engagement of "hearts and minds" in remembering and forgetting.[302] He asserts that "the dialectic of memory versus forgetting is an unescapable dynamic."[303] Remembering and forgetting according to him, is a sociopolitical process involving contestations over meaning of the past, articulation of events, and inscription of meaning to those events.[304] This means that in the process of collective remembering parties choose to forget that which is of little significance to them. In this sense, as Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt assert "every act of remembering is at once an act of forgetting, because it is both selective and partial."[305] Stern again explains that the

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[301] Antjie Krog, "To Remember and Acknowledge: The Way Ahead," in *The Healing of a Nation?*, ed. Alex Boraine and Janet Levy (Cape Town: Justice in Transition, 1995), 115.

[302] Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London, 1998*, Latin America otherwise (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), xxvii.

[303] Ibid., xxvii.

[304] Cillian McGrattan and Stephen Hopkins, "Memory in Post-Conflict Societies: From Contention to Integration?," *Ethnopolitics* 16, no. 5 (October 20, 2017): 490, accessed May 15, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2016.1218644.

[305] Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt, *Memory and Political Change* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5.

dialectic of remembering and forgetting is important in contexts where different social groups bring varying truth claims about past events. For him contestations over memories requires coming to terms with many unarticulated events that may provoke anger and strong opposition from different groups.[306] For Schreiter memory involves "remembering certain events, reconstructing conversations, and recalling feelings…"[307] Therefore, in order to envision a shared future a process of social reconciliation requires engaging in collective conversations that help groups reevaluate their stances, perceptions of the other, and transform their attitudes.

Collective remembering can trigger ways of identifying common elements of suffering. It can help groups "step out of their ethnocentric interpretive frameworks"[308] to recognize common narratives, and that the notorious legacy of oppression claimed other victims outside their own groups. If the recognition of this common denominator (namely, suffering caused by ethnic resentment, hostility, and mutual exclusion) is achieved through conversations, solidarity with victims across different groups may begin to happen. And if the recognition of common narratives can forge collective memories (with varying details), then this process can help reconstruct common identity. This implies that collective remembering becomes a component of social reconciliation, if it helps the establishment of collective national identity. How this process can be achieved is primarily a task of political decision. Nevertheless, the Church in Uganda can be an instrument of social mobilization in the process of reconstructing a national narrative and identity that can engender healing. Chapter five will articulate practical ways of achieving this goal.

2.3.1.2 Healing of Memories and Transformation of Attitudes

In this section I argue that healing memories is crucial to collective memory. It fosters the

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[306] Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile*, xxvii.
[307] Ibid., 36.
[308] Yolanda Dreyer, "Empathy as Resistance in an Age of Protest: Turning the Othe Cheek," *Theological Studies* 74, no. 4 (2018): 289.

lessening of resentment and exclusion, in that, it has the potential to transform attitudes toward the other. In my analysis of Uganda's context, healing of memories involves four aspects: (1) Willingness to face the painful past, (2) safe space for victims, their families, and perpetrators to tell their stories, (3) developing new perspectives with a promise of change, and (4) these encounters should seek to elicit compassion for victims.

Collective remembering and reconstruction of memory may not necessarily lead to the transformation of attitudes and resentment. In fact, these conversations and encounters are prone to further aggravate the already fragile ethnic relations. Divisions may persist after conversations and collective remembering. This was evident in the Truth and Reconciliation process of South Africa. Victims often retained strong eversions toward the perpetrators after these encounters.[309]

Robert Schreiter rightly wonders if negative memories can be healed given the strong impulses that accompany them, and the narratives they generate. Schreiter notes that although individuals can certainly transcend negative memories, the collective power negative events have on whole societies often remains quite strong to tame.[310] Painful memories can block any resolution of past differences, and in fact, they leave behind "corrosive narratives that further erode the foundations of social harmony and peaceful coexistence."[311] The anger and resentment, and the desire for vengeance that accompany negative memories may be difficult to tame especially when these events are reinterpreted in new negative narratives. Therefore, I suggest that the process of collective remembering requires a delicate process of the healing of memories. This means that as a result of healing of memories victims, their families, and communities may remember negative events without the accompanying pain that these events evoke. Only then, the healing of memories

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[309] Brandon Hamber, Dineo Nageng, and Gabriel O'Malley, "'Telling It Like It Is...': Understanding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from the Perspective of Survivors," *Psychology in Society* 26 (2000): 38.
[310] Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," 113.
[311] Mohammed Girma, ed., *The Healing of Memories: African Christian Responses to Politically Induced Trauma* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), xii.

possesses the potential of transforming attitudes and resentment against the other. It is ultimately crucial to the building of a common future.[312]

First, coming to terms with the present involves a willingness to face the painful memories. Negative memories are 'pasts that do not pass.' Digging into the past and/or encountering those who are ethnically, ideologically, and geographically different is a daunting but necessary task. Theologian Yolanda Dreyer states, "the story of the other can make authentic 'feeling into' [their experience] difficult." [313] She argues that such conversations are difficult because they seem to bring criticism to some participants or groups. Persons and communities face the difficult task of relating the wounds of the past in these conversations and encounters. Nevertheless, if these conversations and encounters are carefully directed, they become significant ways of preventing exclusive ethnic negative attitudes against persons and communities of their former oppressors. The Soutn African Truth and Reconciliation process demonstrated the potential benefit of sharing stories. It evinced how healing truth can emerge from these encounters. Alex Boraine states that healing involves looking back to the past with a strong focus on the future. [314] This type of truth requires safe space for victims and/or their families, and perpetrators to tell their stories.

Second, this process requires a safe environment for encounters. Healing of memories requires intergroup participation. As biblical scholar Musa W. Dube states, "those who tell their stories count their stories and membership to wider community as necessary data for healing and building community."[315] In the encounters between different groups, participants can forge new ways of relation and envision a common future in which perpetrators do not repeat the crimes of

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[312] Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past," 111.
[313] Dreyer, "Empathy as Resistance in an Age of Protest: Turning the Othe Cheek," 289.
[314] Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 288.
[315] Musa W. Dube, "The Cry of Rachel: African Women's Reading of the Bible for Healing," in *The Healing of Memories: African Christian Responses to Politically Induced Trauma*, ed. Mohammed Girma (Lanham, MD: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2018), 129.

the past. Safe spaces for telling stories helps to unveil these narratives and restore dignity of victims by granting them an opportunity to tell their own versions of accounts. It also helps victims regain trust in social processes that recognizes their pain and worth, and works toward achieving justice and building community. Telling of stories in safe space can initiate healing for it enables silenced voices to be heard, and in the process long-standing wounds of victims recognized. This process is cathartic. Boraine asserts that giving victims space to speak, breaks the silence surrounding the past atrocities, thus "restoring memory and humanity."[316] This means that safe spaces and the right to express themselves help victims gain control of their lives and counter the dehumanizing silence imposed on them by oppressive regimes.

In the Ugandan context, bringing communities that are geographically, ethnically, and ideologically separated into conversation is required even if symbolically through representatives of different groups. This is because native groups are localized in certain geographical areas in the country with little or no contact with others. The first and perhaps only encounters some groups ever had, is through oppressors from another group. For instance, Milton Obote and Idi Amin soldiers of predominantly northern ethnic group often drove on trucks through villages in the south terrorizing people. The perceptions people developed about persons from the north, were of violence. Encounters of a different kind are important, to inspire new perceptions.

Third, these spaces have the potential of forging new ways of perceiving the other, interpreting the past, and finding new connections of meaning in the present. Boraine explains that in such encounters, healing truth can begin to emerge, giving new meaning to the multi-layered narratives circulating within communities. Since interpretations of the past are not static, new perspectives of what happened can begin to develop engendering new meaning. In telling stories

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[316] Boraine, *A Country Unmasked*, 290.

participants begin to renegotiate boundaries that divide them. These encounters can help reveal truth hitherto unknown to others, and thus reinterpret narratives. In this way, new perspectives have the potential to dissolve the toxicity that surrounds past events.[317] Persons and communities may be released from a spirit of revenge that holds them captive to vicious cycles of exclusion in order to forge a common future. These perspectives can empower victims to act in positive ways. Wrongdoers also need to be perceived in ways that break down the exclusive category of 'being evildoers.' The sociopolitical and economic conditions that led to their participation in atrocities need to be understood. Their humanity too needs to be restored.

Fourth, these conversations and encounters have the potential of evoking compassion for victims and their families. The quality of compassionate attention to victims' narratives can be a liberating experience.[318] Encounters in storytelling can give birth to communities of compassion which may collectively find ways to assuage pain of victims. Communities of compassion may assist victim in ways that the remembered past does not evoke further resentment which often accompanies traumatic memories. When a compassionate community is born out of these encounters, victims and their families discover that they are not alone.[319] Such a community of compassion creates solidarity that empowers victims to trust social networks. Similarly, a community of compassion has a duty to mobilize its members to advocate for truth and justice for victims. When such communities are born, hope for victims is created. That hope fosters healing for victims from pain and resentment. Hope can bring relief and encourage forgiveness and reconciliation. Trudy Govier argues that "the memories that accompany forgiveness will be memories that exclude resentment and allow us to 'let go' while retaining the knowledge that these

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[317] Schreiter, "Sharing Memories of the Past: The Healing of Memories and Interreligious Encounter," 114.
[318] Anna Aragno, "The Language of Empathy: An Analysis of Its Constitution, Development, and Role in Psychoanalytic Listening," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 56, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 733, accessed January 26, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177/0003065108322097.
[319] Girma, *The Healing of Memories*, 129.

things were done, and they were wrong."[320] In other words, the truth about the remembered past no longer triggers resentment and negative attitudes.

Hence, the healing of memories can help victims and communities be liberated from a "spirit of revenge."[321] They can begin to recognize each other's narrative of exclusion, hostility, and victimization. A common memory of suffering can alter attitudes against the other. For instance, a recognition that some of the notorious crimes in northern Uganda were committed by child soldiers who were themselves victims of abductions, might alter one's perception of such perpetrators. Truth about the past can transform exclusive boundaries that demarcate 'us' from 'them' and situate identities, grievances, memories, narratives, and attitudes within a wider context. This implies that healing of memories in these encounters envisions the uncovering of truth.

2.3.2 Truth-Telling

The third element that facilitates transformation is truth-telling. Truth is a component of healing memories and fostering justice. It also helps restore trust in public institutions to protect victims. A practice of truth-telling interrupts, to use Schreiter's phrase 'the narrative of a lie' to foster a new way of understanding and interpreting the past. Even if the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount does not explicitly state it, I suggest that the encounter with one's adversary, which Jesus commands (cf Matt 5:24) presupposes telling the truth of the event(s) that caused the harm. So that the reconciliation is not based on 'a narrative of a lie,' but rather on truth. Within social conflicts, truth-telling is a *sine qua non* condition of justice. Groups in conflict ought to uncover the truth about what happened and come to terms with the crimes that have caused victims pain and

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[320] Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 61.
[321] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 137.

suffering. The crimes of the past and present need to be uncovered.

Human rights reports show that in Uganda between 1966 to 1986 more than one million people were killed in state sponsored violence.[322] In contemporary period, silence covers the most heinous crimes. For instance, perpetrators of atrocities in Luwero Triangle have never been unveiled.[323] Similarly, during the two decades of the insurgency in northern Uganda tens of thousands of deaths, the disappeared, the abducted, all demand accountability. In the recent past, the military officers who ordered the massacres of unarmed civilians on November 26, 2016 in Kasese in western Uganda including little children and the subsequent burial of their bodies and the guarding of mass graves have not been brought to justice. There are testimonies of burnt villages, vandalized property, memories of mass killings, mass graves, and memorials of skulls that bear witness to a crime-infested past. Perpetrators in all these crimes have never been brought to justice. Survivors, families of victims, and their communities remember bodies dumped in rivers and lakes, corpses littered along roadsides, the tortured and mutilated, and the raped girls and women bear the trauma of these atrocities. Who were the perpetrators; what happened to the bodies of the disappeared, where were they disposed of? Victims and their families and communities need closure. Records must be put straight so that "the insult of occultation is not added to the injury of oppression."[324] Sadly, at the time of this writing, these crimes are still happening in Uganda. Nevertheless, the uncovering of truth can foster justice, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

In Uganda's multi-layered context of political wounds uncovering truth requires a combination of approaches. In addition to healing truth I mentioned above, objective, factual or

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[322] Thomas P. Ofcansky, "View of Musevenis War and the Ugandan Conflict," |*Journal of Conflict Studies* 19, no. 1 (1999): 1, accessed January 19, 2021, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/4386/5071.
[323] Pauline Bernard, "The Politics of the Luweero Skulls: The Making of Memorial Heritage and Post-Revolutionary State Legitimacy Over the Luweero Mass Graves in Uganda," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 189, accessed January 17, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1288959.
[324] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 234.

forensic truth is crucial to justice.[325]   Alex Boraine explains that objective, factual or forensic truth requires compiling comprehensive reports by experts. These reports draw their analyses based on factual and objective information and evidence at their disposal.[326] This form of truth requires an investigative approach on particular incidents pertaining to specific crimes. Truth-telling helps restore trust in social institutions, dispels mutual mistrust, and facilitates healing.   However, Uganda's current context has several challenges to truth uncovering that I elaborate below.

2.3.2.1 Challenges to Truth-Uncovering in Uganda's Political Setting

In the aftermath of violence, processes of truth-telling come with insurmountable difficulties.   Uganda's political history evinces these challenges. New regimes have always manipulated the truth of past events to rally people for political support. As George Orwell expresses it in his novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past."[327]   New governments often reconstruct narratives of the past events, concealing their own participation in crimes during the so-called 'wars of liberation' and entrench further divisive ethnic ideology. The masking of misdeeds or attributing all blame on past governments or denying crimes they committed has often become a normalized way of doing politics in the aftermath of violence. And if these new regimes admit that crimes happened "they deny that they happened the way they happened."[328]

The United Nations Security Council of which Uganda is a member, affirms the right of victims to truth and the establishment of truth commissions.[329] The entitlement to truth obliges

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[325] "Excerpt: The Four Truths (from Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report)," *NPS: Common Learning Portal*, accessed January 13, 2021, https://mylearning.nps.gov/library-resources/trc-four-truths/.
[326] Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 288.
[327] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (New York, N.Y.: Signet Classics, 1977), 34 and 248.
[328] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 233.
[329] United Nations Security Council, "The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies: Report of the Secretary-General," *Refworld*, 17 §51, last modified August 2004, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.refworld.org/docid/45069c434.html.

states to provide victims and their families with information about past crimes and to establish public records of such crimes.[330] Uganda's current regime is unlikely to fulfill this obligation. The persisting climate of intimidation, fear, abductions of political opponents, suppression of information, and extrajudicial killings make the state incapable of investigating its own crimes. Moreover, due to extensive corruption in government and civil society Uganda's judicial system is severely compromised to carry out credible investigations and prosecution of perpetrators.[331] There is urgent need for international intervention especially the African Union and the United Nations.

If crimes are to be investigated there is need for truth commissions. Truth commissions require significant planning, consulting stakeholders, financing, sufficient access to resources, police files, uncompromised investigations, power to compel production of evidence, holding public hearings, impartiality in reporting and to guarantee security for persons and organizations who participate in the process.[332] These processes require either government cooperation and/or international involvement. Given the current political conditions in Uganda, it would be illusory to expect the current government to permit transparency and independence of truth commission(s).[333] In the past attempts to address legacies of human rights violations have failed. For instance, in 1974 the United States Institute of Peace established a commission of inquiry into

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[330] United Nations OHCHR, "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Study on the Right to Truth," 11-12 §§35-46, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.ohchr.org.

[331] Aili Mari Tripp, *Museveni's Uganda: Paradoxes of Power in a Hybrid Regime* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2010), 91-92.

[332] Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 230–33.

[333] International Center for Justice Uganda, "Confronting the Past: Truth Telling and Reconciliation in Uganda," *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 3, last modified September 26, 2012, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.ictj.org/publication/confronting-past-truth-telling-and-reconciliation-uganda.

the disappearances[334] of people within the first few years of Id Amin's regime.[335] Amin's government however, made it impossible for this commission to function smoothly. The government intimidated witnesses and constantly interfered in the process.[336]

Similarly, in the period from 1986 to 1995 another commission of inquiry was established by the United States Institute of Peace to investigate war crimes.[337] Like the 1974 commission of inquiry, lack of political will, resources, and cooperation from the current National Resistance Movement (NRM) government the commission failed to effectively carry out its mandate. Where evidence was sufficient and warranted prosecution, the truth commission forwarded its finding to the Police Investigation Unit but hardly any of the cases made it to courts. Priscilla B. Hayner reports that the commission of 1986 to 1995 forwarded over two hundred cases implicating over five thousand persons to the public prosecutor. However, only a handful of cases for minor offenses were prosecuted.[338] For her, this failure shows an ill-functioning justice system and lack of political will on part of the state. Consequently, many of the recommendations of the commission were never implemented.[339] In effect, a climate of impunity persists, perpetrators of heinous crimes remain at large with no prospect of facing justice.

The work of truth commissions or lack thereof is beyond the scope of theology. What is important here is to emphasize the role of the Catholic Church and all Christian communities to act as a mobilizing force for social change. The Church has the capacity and social calling of living

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[334] Alicia C. Decker, "'Sometime You May Leave Your Husband in Karuma Falls or in the Forest There': A Gendered History of Disappearance in Idi Amin's Uganda 1971–79," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 125–142, at 126 -129 accessed November 23, 2020, https://doi.org.

[335] United States Institute of Peace, "Truth Commission: Uganda 74," *United States Institute of Peace*, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.usip.org/publications/1974/06/truth-commission-uganda-74.

[336] International Center for Justice Uganda, "Confronting the Past," 4.

[337] United States Institute of Peace, "Truth Commission: Uganda 86," *United States Institute of Peace*, last modified May 16, 1986, accessed November 23, 2020, https://www.usip.org/publications/1986/05/truth-commission-uganda-86.

[338] Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 97–99.

[339] International Center for Justice Uganda, "Confronting the Past," 4.

in a manner that is faithful to the Gospel in confronting the evil of oppression. Precisely, the Church in Uganda has the potential of being a force of unity among non-government organizations like the Uganda Law Society, Religious-Cultural leaders forums, among others to bring about social transformation and reconciliation. As theologian Elias Omondo Opongo asserts, initiatives for reconciliation require the Church to be in solidarity with the people, especially victims.[340] This implies that the Church ought to engage in causes of justice. As alluded to above, justice demands the transformation of social structures of injustice.

2.3.2.2 Structural Injustice

As noted above constructing right relations in Uganda's society takes more than transformation of attitudes and practices. It is not enough to transform the character of persons and communities. Social transformation and reconciliation also involve confronting structures of injustice that continue to oppress millions. Applied to the Church, the demand for justice in the bible is so central that other responses (worship, acts of piety) to God are empty if one fails to fulfill the requirement for justice (Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8). This implies that the structural injustice that creates the conditions for the suffering of the millions must be confronted. Speaking in general terms, by structural injustice I refer to entrenched inequalities of access to privilege, power, and resources that create unjust conditions for the vast majority of Ugandans.[341] It also refers to calculated and strategic use of violence and oppression against particular persons and groups.

Structural injustice in Uganda comprises of a constellation of persons, mechanisms,

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[340] Elias Omondi Opongo, "Inventing Creative Approaches to Complex Systems of Justice: A New Call for a Vigilant and Engaged Church," in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 74.

[341] Andrea Sangiovanni, "Structural Injustice and Individual Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 49, no. 3 (2018): 461, accessed February 26, 2021, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/josp.12250.

institutions, formal and informal at multiple levels. It is a complex network of collaborators that encompasses persons, groups (including religious and business), corporate organizations, institutions, laws and policies within the state and public sector. These networks serve the interests of the elite and their collaborators while excluding the vast majority. Structures of injustice also involve the enactment unjust laws and policies that target to victimize specific groups, while benefiting others especially government agents.[342] Many of the participants in structures of social injustice may not even be aware that they are part a system that oppresses others. For many, these structures may appear normalized ways of doing business or surviving where resources are limited. Agents in structural injustice may participate without directly involving in wrongdoing but facilitate a climate of oppression and benefit from practices that harm others. Catherine Lu building on the work of Iris Young argues that "participants in a social structure that is structurally unjust are not complicit in the specific wrongdoing of culpable agents, but they are morally and politically responsible for creating or entrenching social conditions that may make some category of persons more vulnerable to suffering interactional wrongs or objectional harms." [343] In other words, structural injustice has different levels and layers that are sometimes hard to decipher.

As I noted in chapter one, structural injustice in Uganda has its roots in British colonial political and economic system that constructed ethnic groups into such identities and therefore structures of inequality. I illustrated the malady of class formations based on ethnic and racial identity and how the colonial state system was based on patron-client system; a political order that relied on relations of patronage. Access to power and privilege was granted by the colonial ruling elite who dispensed them at will to whomever they deemed an advantageous native ally to the

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[342] Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, Oxford political philosophy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99.

[343] Catherine Lu, "Responsibility, Structural Injustice, and Structural Transformation," *Ethics & Global Politics* 11, no. 1 (2018): 45, accessed February 25, 2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview.

colonial cause. Despite the end of British colonial rule, the system persists in the ethnic state formations, in which ethnic elite control power and privilege, and dispense them to a network of persons, organizations, and groups that reinforce their hegemony and stay in power; first within members of their ethnic group and second among some members of others groups allied to the ethnic regime.

At the center of structural injustice is a 'hegemonic presidency' or personal rule.[344] The presidency is the dominant institution and all political authority and economic privilege derives from the president who forges a series of alliances within the patron-client network.[345] In this network, government institutions like the judiciary, police, military, finance, and others are not accountable to the citizens; rather they serve the person of the president and the ethnic elite. The functioning of these institutions [or lack thereof] is directly controlled by the president who manages privilege and state power. In the weakening of government and civil institutions that serve citizens, regimes in Uganda have relied on patron-client networks in the distribution of state resources and services to those that support the regime, while repressing perceived rivals.[346] The clients in this network of privilege accrue rewards for their loyalty to the executive body of government as well as the security agencies.

Such a system entrenches corruption at all levels of society as the main mechanism that controls and at the same time undermines the proper functioning of government and the public institutions. Here, I use a broad definition of corruption to refer to "fraud (theft through

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[344] George K. Kieh, "The 'Hegemonic Presidency' in African Politics," *African Social Science Review; Kennesaw* 9, no. 1 (January 2018): 36, accessed January 29, 2020, http://search.proquest.com/docview. Political scientist George Klay Kieh defines "hegemonic presidency" as the presidency that wields "tremendous unfettered powers that span the broad gamut of the public sector—from unbridled control of the 'national purse' to expansive appointive powers."
[345] Bruce J. Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism," *African Affairs* 97, no. 388 (July 1998): 308.
[346] Philip G Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 45.

misrepresentation), embezzlement (misappropriation of corporate or public funds) and bribery (payments made in order to gain an advantage or to avoid a disadvantage)."[347] Given the limited resources and services in Uganda corruption makes persons and institutions constantly vulnerable to compromise, including religious leaders and political opponents. Corruption in Uganda has entrenched deep roots in public institutions, office holders, and private social organizations, and in some cases even among the clergy.[348] It is theft that damages the livelihood of persons and communities in which 'insiders profit at the expense of outsiders.' Agents participate in transactions of corruption in what they consider a 'way to survive.' Byran R. Evans classifies corruption under three categories: The first is incidental corruption; it is small scale that may involve a junior public official accepting/demanding a bribe. Second, there is systemic corruption; this permeates government departments, businesses, and other public sectors. Third, there is 'kleptocracy' or government by theft.[349] At this level corruption includes political corruption (buying votes, jobs for supporters among others) and the corruption of the legal process (bribing election officials, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, and malicious prosecution of political opponents). All these levels of corruption are characteristic in Uganda's past and contemporary situation. Hence, corruption in Uganda is institutionalized within government agencies that ensure that corrupt activities are continued and reinforced.[350]Transparency International annually publishes the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of countries around the world. In 2020 CPI showed that five of the ten most corrupt countries in the world were African

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[347] Byran R. Evans, "The Cost of Corruption: A Discussion Paper on Corruption, Development, and the Poor," *Christian Action with the World's Poor* 4, no. 3 (2012): 3.

[348] Andrew M. Mwenda and Roger Tangri, "Patronage Politics, Donor Reforms, and Regime Consolidation in Uganda," *African Affairs* 104, no. 416 (2005): 452, accessed February 28, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable.

[349] Evans, "The Cost of Corruption: A Discussion Paper on Corruption, Development, and the Poor," 6–7.

[350] Wilson B. Asea, "Combating Political and Bureaucratic Corruption in Uganda: Colossal Challenges for the Church and the Citizens," *HTS Teologiese Studies* 74, no. 2 (January 6, 2018): 1, accessed February 28, 2021, http://go.gale.com/ps/i.do.

countries. Out of the 180 countries Uganda was ranked the thirty-seventh most corrupt country in the world.[351]

Effects of the structural injustice of corruption are diverse; they range from undermining democracy, infringement on basic human rights, and loss of quality of government to denial of basic human services and resources to the most vulnerable majority. Corruption in Uganda has damaged the country's whole economy and public services. The majority poor who need public services and resources suffer most. It is the poor who dependent on these services (public health, schools, transportation), since they have no other alternatives. [352] Corruption is a structural injustice, it devours economic growth, affects society's well-being, undermines human rights, deprives the livelihood of the most vulnerable, and impedes democratic processes. In effect, corruption is a dehumanizing evil that deprives millions of their human dignity and basic means to live decent lives. Corruption needs to be confronted at all levels.

For effective social change to happen, the eradication of structural injustice requires the participation of networks of persons, groups, organizations (both local and international), and willingness to mobilize these groups in solidarity with victims of structural injustice. The confronting of structural injustice is constitutive of being a disciple of Jesus and the mission the Church in Uganda. The existence of structural injustice puts a demand on the Church to take the side of victims and work for social transformation. Again, biblical justice demands the protection of the most vulnerable. The Church has a vocation to embody God's love for the most vulnerable. As demonstrated in the ethic of the Sermon on Mount restoring right relation demands the elimination of the conditions that create inequality in order to liberate victims of oppression. The

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[351] "2020 - Corruption Perception Index," *Transparency.Org*, accessed March 2, 2021, https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020.
[352] Evans, "The Cost of Corruption: A Discussion Paper on Corruption, Development, and the Poor," 2.

call for discipleship in Uganda's contemporary context gives the Church's mission a specific character of *who* the disciples of Jesus ought to become, *how* that quality of being affects their social relations and *what* they do in Uganda's society. The next section illustrates how the call to discipleship sets a duty on the Church to engage in reconciling justice.

2.3.3 Reconciling Justice

In addition to memory, identity, and truth described above, the fourth component that facilitates transformation is justice. In reference to Matt 5:24, Hans Dieter Betz suggests that if the goal of the encounter is the elimination of the resentment between the two adversaries, in order to restore right relation some form of compensation should be an implied possibility.[353] This means that the recognition of the offense and the means to make amends to reconstruct the broken relations should be part of the encounter. As shown above biblical justice conceives of human persons not as isolated monads, "but rather as beings who are fundamentally connected and defined in and through their relationship with others."[354] Applied to Uganda's context, the reconstruction of right relations suggests a form of justice that reaches out to victims, communities, and offenders. In this section I argue that restorative justice is the form of justice with a holistic relational outlook that fosters the reconstruction of broken relations. Depending on the needs of the participants, restorative justice focuses on a wider range of programs of rebuilding broken relations. More specifically, it involves attending to the needs of victims, their families, and communities, as well as to offenders and their communities. It seeks ways of repairing the damage and nurtures the willingness to change. In short, I argue that for Uganda's context restorative justice needs to attend to four aspects; (1) accountability, (2) needs of victims and their families/communities, (3)

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[353] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 224.
[354] Jennifer J Llewellyn and Daniel Philpott, eds., *Restorative Justice, Reconciliation, and Peacebuilding*, Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 3.

reconciling victims and offenders and communities, and (4) community participation.

First, in Uganda's context, restorative justice requires to focus on accountability and opportunity for offenders to act humanely and restore public trust with a commitment not to repeat past crimes. Accountability may take many forms including legal conviction of the most heinous crimes. Legal conviction does not necessarily mean retributive punishment, but rather the exposure of the heinous past and ways of holding perpetrators accountable. For instance, on July 8, 2005 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for the top commanders of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti.[355] While at the same time, traditional restorative approaches like *mato oput* [356] have been used for child soldiers who returned to villages.[357] In many instances, these traditional mechanisms have helped remake relations of trust and restoration of community cohesion.[358]

Second, restorative approach ought to focus on the needs of victims, their families and communities. In comparing restorative approaches and criminal justice mechanisms Gerry Johnstone explains that in restorative justice, "when a crime is committed the primary question is not simply what should we do with the offender, rather what should we do for the victim?"[359] In restorative approaches, the needs of the victims and their communities are the primary focus. Johnstone explains that one of the limitations of the criminal justice systems is to neglect victims' needs. Proponents of restorative approaches suggest that reparation of harm for victims and the

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[355] International Criminal Court, "Kony et al. Case," last modified 2005, accessed January 21, 2021, https://www.icc-cpi.int/uganda/kony/Pages/main.aspx.

[356] *Mato oput*, is an Acholi traditional justice mechanism (northern Uganda) that rests on full acceptance of responsibility for the crime. In its practice, restoration is possible only through voluntary admission of wrongdoing by the offender, acceptance of responsibility and the seeking of forgiveness, with then opens the way for healing. Tolerance and forgiveness are enshrined in the principles of *mato oput* and other associated rituals.

[357] Luc Huyse and Mark Salter, eds., *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Stockholm, Sweden: Bulls Graphics AB, 2008), 107–109.

[358] Ibid., 107.

[359] Gerry Johnstone, *Restorative Justice: Ideas, Values, Debates* (Portland: OR: Willan Pub, 2002), 10.

healing of their wounds should prevail over punishment of offenders. As shown above, if an offender is both perpetrator and victim, restorative approaches of helping them recognize the harm they caused and ways of reincorporating them into communities are a better option. These approaches offer alternative frameworks of thinking about wrongdoing and accountability beyond criminal justice system practices. [360]

In Uganda's ethically fragmented context an exclusively retributive justice system can present some challenges for national reconciliation and reconstruction. Prosecuting perpetrators may deepen the already fragile ethnic relations. This is because a villain of one group/regime might be a hero of another. As shown above, this fact became evident at the overthrow of the second regime of Milton Obote. Another challenge, as already noted, concerns cases where the perpetrators of heinous crimes were victims themselves; for instance, the paradox of child soldiers abducted by the LRA in northern Uganda. Prosecution of such offenders in criminal courts might increase the sense of victimization and further divide the communities and the country. It is crucial to treat offenders as 'one of us,' not as an external enemy or threat that needs to be incapacitated or simply eliminated. Offenders and their families are part of communities. They should not be cut off as totally as outsiders. This brings me to the third aspect of reconciling justice.

Third, restorative approaches should be designed to bridge the gap between victims and offenders so that offenders become aware of the dehumanizing nature of their crimes to their victims and their families, as well as finding positive ways to repair the damage and help the reconstruction of lives. Offenders too need to find new ways of reconstructing their humanity. Community engagement is crucial to bringing offenders to this awareness. Johnstone further

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[360] Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding (New York, NY: Good Books, 2015), 7.

suggests that offenders need both moral indignation as well as empathy.[361] Moreover, in ethnic conflicts communities are often enablers of some crimes.

Fourth, restorative approaches in Uganda need to involve entire communities. Communities need to get involved in restoring harmony, particularly by supporting victims and attending to offenders. Howard Zehr explains that restorative justice involves a willingness for communities to move toward a new sense of identity; aiming at transformation of persons and communities. [362] Ordinary members of community might serve as mediators or be involved in negotiating, witnessing, and enforcing agreements. Community support is crucial for victims to feel safe again and for offenders to find that they have another chance to live differently. If the four aspects are effectively applied, they have the potential of facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation and the reconstruction of Uganda's society.

2.3.4 Toward Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Making Fundamental Options

The fifth element of transformation is forgiveness. In Matthew 5:24, since the goal of the encounter between the adversaries is the removal of a grudge between them, Betz suggests that some form of petition for forgiveness should be expected.[363] Above and beyond practices of restorative justice, acknowledgment, punishment or restitution is the offer of forgiveness. The ability to extend forgiveness is a monumental landmark in forging new ways of restoring right relation. In the aftermath of political conflicts for instance in South Africa, Timor-Lester, Germany among others "contentious debates pitted forgiveness against punishment, amnesty against accountability, mercy against justice.[364] And of the several practices of reconciliation, forgiveness

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[361] Ibid., 12.
[362] Ibid., 7.
[363] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 224.
[364] Daniel Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*, Studies in Strategic Peacebuilding (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 251.

has been most criticized. The opponents of forgiveness argue that it offers a free pass to offenders, ignoring the demands of justice, namely punishment and accountability. Among the critics of the practice of forgiveness Thomas Brudholm argues for the 'morality of unforgiveness' in opposition to tendencies that seem to make forgiveness easy and accessible to all.[365] Brudholm is aware of the therapeutic perspective of forgiveness, however, he pays more attention to the victims' right to anger and resentment as motivational forces for the enduring fight for justice. In his analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa, he argues that although the goal of TRC was a forward-looking endeavor to achieve social reconciliation, the primary concern of most victims was *rarely* reconciliation.[366] He also criticizes the ideal of the TRC that tended to interpret forgiveness as morally superior to unforgiveness by victims toward apartheid perpetrators. Rajeev Bhargava also notes that "victims in South Africa have complained bitterly that the justification of forgiveness derives from a particular moral (and/or religious) vision with which they do not identify and that therefore it is not incumbent upon them to heed the plea to forgive."[367] For Brudholm, forgiveness was a goal of the 'ruling elite' who somehow required victims to accept loss and *move on* for the sake of peace, so that a desire for revenge does not impede the goals set for the national process of reconciliation or turn victims into mirror images of perpetrators and throw the country into anarchy.[368] Social anthropologist, Richard Wilson also observes that;

> "The [TRC] hearings were structured in such a fashion that an expression of
> anger, or desire for revenge, would have seemed misplaced. The virtue of
> forgiveness and reconciliation were so loudly and roundly applauded that
> emotions of revenge, hatred, and bitterness were rendered unacceptable, an

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[365] Thomas Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue: Jean Améry and the Refusal to Forgive*, Politics, History, and Social Change (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), ix.

[366] Ibid., 35.emphasis in the original

[367] Rajeev Bhargava, "Restoring Decency to Barbaric Societies," in *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 61.

[368] Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 170.

ugly intrusion on a peaceful, healing process"[369]

For Brudholm, and rightly so, at the center of forgiveness and reconciliation, there was a focus on the shared future. Desmond Tutu articulates this vision in his book, *No Future Without Forgiveness.* Tutu argued for forgiveness as an alternative to retribution.[370] Nevertheless, Brudholm points out that many of the victims demanded that perpetrators face the full wrath of retributive justice and be strictly punished. For him, this demand is not a desire for revenge, rather an expression for the yearning for justice that if attended to, would bring relief to victims, their families, and communities.[371] In his study of Jean Améry's *Ressentiments*[372] he argues for the moral validity of anger and resentment, as a worthy alternative to forgiveness. For Brudholm, "the preservation of outrage or resentment and the refusal to forgive can be the reflex expression of a moral protest and ambition that is as permissible and admirable as the willingness to forgive."[373]

Brudholm's view considers the idea that resentment can be a moral protest against the violation of the moral order. And that it might be as morally acceptable and legitimate as the willingness to forgive for those who espouse that moral and/or religious view. Brudholm is among scholars who adopt the idea that first; forgiveness is an unjust demand on victims to forgo their pain and loss, and even let go of their anger against the perpetrator for religious reasons. And if victims refuse to let go of their anger and/or fail to forgive they are often taunted with guilt. Second, that forgiveness forgoes the demands of justice. Hence, when victims are encouraged to offer forgiveness they are further victimized and rendered powerless in their legitimate protest against

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[369] Richard Wilson, "The Sizwe Will Not Go Away: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Human Rights and Nation-Building in South Africa," *African Studies* 55, no. 2 (1996): 17, accessed March 10, 2021, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00020189608707847.
[370] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 258–70.
[371] Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 36.
[372] The essay was published in English under the title: Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
[373] Brudholm, *Resentment's Virtue*, 171.

their dehumanization by perpetrators and in their endeavor to regain their humanity. Forgiveness is interpreted as further injustice against victims, in a sense that it is a denial of their right to legitimate rage, refusal to be recognized as such, and rejection of their demand to fully punish offenders.

Although I differ from Brudholm's interpretation of forgiveness, I recognized his strong attention to the significance of acknowledging and attending to the deep, ingrained, and complex memories of pain and suffering. Sometimes these memories are so dominant that they provide powerful reasons for maintaining resentment, unforgiveness, divisions, and antipathies.[374] While acknowledging these legitimate issues, I argue that forgiveness exceeds the demands for retributive justice, it empowers victims and fosters healing and reconciliation.

First, like Brudholm those who espouse the idea that forgiveness abandons justice, they often limit the notion of justice to retributive practices; whose main goal is punitive. As shown above, justice is a broad relational concept, it has a variety of approaches depending on the context. Moreover, forgiveness exceeds the conditions demanded by approaches of justice. It may be offered unconditionally without acknowledgement of the wrong, accountability, punishment or truth. Forgiveness is first and foremost meant for the healing of the victim, as I will explain below.

Second, forgiveness is empowerment when it occurs as an act of freedom [on the part of the victim] that restores the humanity and dignity for the victim. Implicit in the mere act of forgiving is the recognition that a wrong was committed. And that the victim has the safe space and ability to willingly offer forgiveness. While Brudholm's view (mainly based on the South African context) suggests that victims and their families are compelled to forgive, thus limiting

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[374] Stanley S. Harakas, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Orthodox Perspective," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney Lawrence Petersen (Radnor, PA: The Templeton Foundation Press, 2002), 72.

their freedom, I defend the view that forgiveness comes from the victim's own initiative and free will; not an imposition from an external force. As Daniel Philpott puts it, "a victim *decides* [emphasis added] to revise her enduring view of a perpetrator in a fashion that is restorative."[375] Hence, forgiveness opens the possibility to relate to the other in new ways that deconstruct the order that violated the victim's humanity and dignity. This means that forgiveness is not merely the letting go of resentment or powerful emotions, rather a moral choice, a decision to forego vengeance.

Third, forgiveness aims at helping the releasing of the victim from "the powerful emotion pull of revenge" that seeks to imprison both victim and perpetrator in "a perverse communion of mutual hate."[376] Forgiveness seeks to curtail the intractable mutual hostility that seeks to enslave the victim, by which she can easily appropriate the vices of the offender and become a mirror image of the perpetrator. It is directed to the victim's well-being and healing, even without demanding the conditions of repentance and acknowledgement of crimes by the offender. While opponents of forgiveness tend to conflate forgiveness with denial of justice, forgiveness exceeds prescriptions of justice. As Volf asserts, forgiveness seeks to "break the power of remembered past and transcends the claims of affirmed justice and so makes the spiral of revenge grind to a halt."[377] Ari Kohen also affirms that "forgiveness is letting go of the power the offense and the offender have over a victim." It means, he continues, "no longer letting that offense and offender dominate"[378] the life of the victim. Forgiveness is an experience that disempowers the past crime and the offender over the victim. In other words, the experience of forgiveness has the potential of freeing the victim from the adverse effects of hate. Without this experience, wounds can fester, in

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[375] Philpott, *Just and Unjust Peace*, 260.
[376] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 120.
[377] Ibid., 121.
[378] Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, 3rd Edition. (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 47.

a sense that the past violation takes over the victim's consciousness and life. Hence, unforgiveness can grant the offender an enduring control over the victim's life. Real forgiveness, then, is an act of liberation and empowerment. It allows "one to move from victim to survivor."[379]

Fourth, forgiveness recognizes that a wrong was committed and needs to be forgiven. As Donald W. argues, every act of forgiveness calls attention to the violation of the moral order by offering to reverse the power of that violated order over the victim. Hence, forgiveness seeks to interrupt the power the crime has over the victim. For Shriver "forgiveness begins with memory suffused with moral judgment."[380] Remembering the wrong, and passing a judgment on the offender's actions is crucial to forgiveness. In other words, "forgiveness does not erase the past."[381] It is not a 'forgive and forget.' Rather, remember in order to forgive. This is perhaps why perpetrators often prefer amnesia. Far from being a mere 'letting go of loss and pain' the process of forgiveness recognizes that harm was done and needs redress. Therefore, forgiveness allows the victim to seek appropriate forms of justice without being shot through with the desire for vengeance.

Hannah Arendt asserts that, "the discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth."[382] Forgiveness was central to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God in a sociopolitical environment suffused with the desire for vengeance; an environment in which 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' was the measure of justice. However, within this traditional measure of justice was infused a spirit of revenge, which Jesus turns on its head. To use

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[379] Ari Kohen, "The Personal and the Political: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Restorative Justice," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 404, accessed January 2, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230903127911.

[380] Donald W. Shriver Jr, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

[381] Harakas, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation: An Orthodox Perspective," 72.

[382] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Second Edition. Sixtieth Anniversary Edition. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 214.

Susan Jacoby's phrase, such retribution was a form of "legalized revenge."[383] For Arendt forgiveness is one of the human capacities that facilitate genuine social change.[384] It passes judgment on the wrongdoer's behavior and directs the involved parties to some form of restitution, compensation or penalty. In this way, forgiveness seeks to provide a framework in which reconciling justice can be pursued, rather than advancing Lamech's logic of seventy-seven-fold revenge (cf Genesis 4:15, 23-24).[385] This means that forgiveness does not abandon justice or accountability of evildoers, it rejects a spirit and acts of retaliation. It becomes evident that forgiveness as a concept of relation offers new ways of reimagining the past and forging a new vision for a shared future. From a Christian point of view forgiveness is not only a social or political concept, but also a gift of God's love extended to the other especially when the offender least deserves it.

2.3.5 Reconciliation and the Transformation of Human Relation

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that forgiveness is not opposed to justice. In fact, it opens persons and communities to broader approaches to restoring broken relations and establishing reconciliation. It is however important to draw the distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. Can reconciliation be achieved in the absence of forgiveness or does the former depend in some way upon the latter? Forgiveness and reconciliation though related, they are quite distinct concepts. As argued above, forgiveness seeks to release a victim from the power of unforgiveness, resentment, and vengeance. It can freely be offered by the victim even without requiring the demand for repentance or acknowledgement of the wrong by the offender. Forgiveness remains an exclusive property of the victim, it cannot be coerced or offered by a third

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[383] Susan Jacoby, *Wild Justice: The Evolution of Revenge*, 1st ed.. (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 299.
[384] Donald W. Shriver Jr, *An Ethic for Enemies*, 6.
[385] Eli Sasaran McCarthy editor, *A Just Peace Ethic Primer*, 18.

party or conflated within any other aspects of reconciliation. Forgiveness is not a prerequisite for achieving reconciliation. I will give a detailed account of the concept of reconciliation in chapter five. Here, I briefly and broadly define *reconciliation* as a process by which conflicted persons and communities actively and practically engage in methods and events that engender mutual respect, recognition, understanding, acceptance, justice, and coexistence. Reconciliation is a process and goal rather than a necessary outcome of forgiveness. Nevertheless, if genuine reconciliation is to take place, it relies on forgiveness.

Furthermore, Howard Zehr separates forgiveness and reconciliation from restorative justice. He argues that "forgiveness or reconciliation is not a primary principle or focus of restorative justice…there should be no pressure to forgive or to seek reconciliation."[386] Zehr states that one ought not conflate forgiveness and reconciliation with the goal of restorative justice. Both forgiveness and reconciliation must first be understood separately, so that the success of restorative justice is not dependent on whether or not victims or communities succeed in forgiving and reconciling with each other.[387] Zehr, notes that, restorative justice nevertheless offers a context where either one or both might happen. However, from a Christian perspective genuine reconciliation desires the application of the ideal of forgiveness. Reconciliation is not only personal and communal concept of relation, but also a Gospel value that arises from love. It fosters reconstruction of relations with a vision of a shared bond of love.

Lastly, it is important to underline that reconciliation is more than a total sum of processes of right remembering, truth-telling, reconciling justice, and forgiveness; it is a work of grace and an ongoing conversion. It presupposes a spirituality that reflects the quality of being or the kind of

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[386] Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Little Books of Justice & Peacebuilding (New York, NY: Good Books, 2015), 13.
[387] Kohen, "The Personal and the Political," 400.

person a disciple of Jesus is in confronting conflicted reality. Chapter three articulates the kind of spirituality desired for discipleship in a context of ethnic fragmentation, exclusion, and hostility.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored a Christian ethic that fosters the transformation of attitudes, practices, and social structures. The ethic is informed by a literal and theological reading of the Sermon on the Mount. The main focus of this ethic is the transformation of persons and communities based on Jesus teaching on the love command. Being a disciple of Jesus ought to reflect the attribute of the heavenly Father who loves all. Hence, the ethic focused on *who* the disciple ought to become, *how* that quality of being ought to shape her relations in society, and *what* she ought to do. This ethic has tried to demonstrate how transformation and establishment of new relations are possible by applying Jesus ethic of the Sermon.

Hence, it has been demonstrated that in the process of social reconciliation reconstruction of right relation incorporates five interrelated components: Memory, truth-telling, restoration of identity, justice, and forgiveness. These components are constitutive of the transformation of attitudes, practices, and social structures in Uganda, as I have argued. The components require the commitment and engagement of the Church as a mobilizing force in social change. The Church requires solidarity with victims of injustice. Chapter five will offer practical ways of the Church's mission. The process of reconciliation however, is not a mere human endeavor. It is a work of God, an act of grace. In its solidarity with the poor the Church is essentially engaged in a spirituality of compassion for victims of injustice. A spirit of compassion as a fundamental Christian disposition reflects Jesus' way of living out the values of the Kingdom. In the next chapter, I develop a spirituality of discipleship based on the principle mercy as inspired by Jesus' disposition toward conflicted reality.

CHAPTER THREE
A SPIRITUALITY OF DISCIPLESHIP IN A RECONCILING SOCIETY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one I argued that Uganda's *ethnic fragmentation* is threefold: It is first and foremost anthropological; it concerns the reconstruction of human identity in terms of difference and otherness. It is also sociopolitical: Although ethnic identity has positive aspects, in Uganda's sociopolitical history it became manipulated to espouse negative ethnic arrangements. Lastly, it has theological implications; it espouses divisions in the body of Christ. As pointed out above, this project focuses on this negative dimension of ethnicity that has wrought the divisions, violence, and suffering of millions of Ugandans.

In chapter two I defended the view that in order to overcome the negative impact of ethnic divisions there is need for a Christian social ethic that seeks to establish positive attitudes, practices, and the transformation of social structures. I demonstrated that based on my reading of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount this ethic offers the disciples of Jesus transforming initiatives (of memory, identity, truth, justice, and forgiveness) as opportunities to envision a new reconciling society. The ethic offered a threefold response to the problem of ethnic fragmentation. It focused on *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do to transform social structures. The first aspect concerns the transformation of character of persons and communities, that is, the mode of being, living, and acting that reflects the person and the life of Jesus. In other words, a disciple inspires the presence of Christ in society through the Spirit. The second regards reclaiming positive ethnic identity and relation to the *other*. Again, chapter one defined 'identity' as a category of belonging and relation, that is often reconstructed in the sociopolitical and economic realms in terms of difference and otherness. While positive aspects of ethnicity foster cultural values, norms, diversity, and a sense of belonging for persons

and groups, nevertheless their anthropological and sociopolitical manipulations undergird negative stereotypes, narratives, discourses, and representations that dehumanize persons of other groups. The Christian ethic sought the humanization of the 'other' by attempting to offer new ways of reconstructing human identity. Hence, the ethic attempted to deconstruct categories of 'difference and otherness' within which the sociopolitical and economic realities of the country are often framed. The third aspect involved the practical implications of discipleship for the wider society beyond confines of ethnic group mindset. It considered the transformation of unjust social structures wrought by ethnic regimes. As previously explained the term 'ethnic regime' refers to ethnocentric political and economic structures dominated and controlled by the elite of one ethnic group. These regimes serve the interests of the minority elite while excluding and oppressing others who are perceived as threats to the group's survival and well-being. I also demonstrated that given the pervasive phenomenon of ethnic fragmentation, changes of regimes have not helped the country emerge from the reality of exclusion, resentment, and hostility based on ethnic identity. In fact, it appears that every new regime replicates similar patterns and mechanisms of exclusion and oppression in new ways. Hence, the Christian social ethic I proposed has broader implications for the transformation not only of persons and communities, but also the sociopolitical and economic structures of the country.

As noted above, the central feature of the Christian social ethic is the transformation of the character of the disciple to reflect the love that the heavenly Father has *for all* (cf Matt 5:48). As a concrete dimension of that love, this chapter establishes a specific Christian spirituality of discipleship founded on mercy. Building on Jon Sobrino's *principle of mercy* this spirituality articulates love in terms of *mercy*. Sobrino defines the principle of mercy as "a specific love, which while standing at the origin of a process, also remains present and active throughout the process,

endowing it with a particular direction and shaping the various elements that compose it."[388] I will later demonstrate that mercy as the first and last of all human reactions to the suffering of victims is the proper response to Uganda's conflicted sociopolitical and economic reality. Second, mercy derives from the nature of God, thus it demonstrates how authentic discipleship ought to reflect God's likeness in attitude and action toward victims of oppression. Third, it is a humanizing principle that defines what it means to be truly human for the subject, victim, and the [ethnic] *other*.[389] Lastly, I argue that mercy is a virtue with personal and public dimensions. It affords growth in grace toward God through human agency. Hence, a spirituality grounded on mercy is essential for the transformation of Uganda's society.

The four reasons stated above constitute three sections of this chapter. Section one explores Jon Sobrino's understanding of spirituality, particularly the principle of mercy as the first and last of human reactions toward the suffering world. From a biblical perspective, section two illustrates the principle of mercy as an attribute of God. Here, I expand Sobrino's notion of mercy to demonstrate that it accords with the biblical notion of the same, and that in its exercise the disciple reflects God's disposition toward the suffering of victims. Hence, mercy establishes a likeness of the disciple to God. Following that line of thought, the third section suggests a re-interpretation of Sobrino's principle of mercy as a humanizing principle. That is, striving to orient oneself to the ideal of mercy in both disposition and action approximates a person to what God intends the human to be. In other words, the fundamental modality of being truly human is to embody and appropriate the merciful nature of God in historical reality just as Jesus, the authentic human did. Thus, I will demonstrate that mercy defines what it means to be truly human and that its exercise has a

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[388] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16.
[389] Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, 63.

humanizing efficacy.[390] In effect, it provides a potential of reclaiming human dignity for persons debased by negative ethnic phenomena precisely by countering the dehumanizing effects of exclusion, oppression, and violence. Here, I envision an openness to the possibility of overcoming enmity and forging positive ethnic relations. Consequently, I argue that insofar as mercy is what it means to be human, it helps restructure human society, and as such it is a virtue with personal and social dimensions. As a virtue its exercise accords with the third disposition of Sobrino's spirituality, namely, mercy affords the disciple the willingness to be swept by the more of graced reality toward an eschatological vision. Here I emphasize the fact that human agency is aided by God's grace to achieve what reality seeks to be. In the next section I turn to Sobrino's understanding of spirituality, particularly the centrality of the principle of mercy.

SECTION I: JON SOBRINO'S UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUALITY

Before exploring Sobrino's spirituality in general and the principle of mercy in particular, it is important to establish why Sobrino's understanding of spirituality is relevant to responding to Uganda's threefold problem particularly in its sociopolitical and economic dimensions. First of all, Sobrino's spirituality provides a theological heuristic framework that helps to examine Uganda's oppressive political and economic systems, and offers ways of confronting it. Second, his spirituality offers insights of eradicating the suffering of victims wrought by such conflicted sociopolitical and economic reality. Third, it helps envision approaches to reestablishing positive human relations in a process of social reconciliation. Below, I proceed from a general understanding of Sobrino's spirituality to his specifically Christian spirituality of liberation, and finally focus on the principle of mercy and how it applies to a conflicted social context.

3.1 Jon Sobrino's Understanding of Spirituality in General

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[390] Jon Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1985), 192.

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Jon Sobrino generally defines spirituality as "the spirit with which a human person engages reality."[391] This means, in his words, "living with a particular *spirit* [emphasis added] in order to be truly a believer, or indeed a human being."[392] For a Christian spiritual life is not solely about 'things of the spirit'[393] as opposed to 'things of the flesh.' Rather, a spiritual life is constituted by all reality that comprises one's entire life conditions.

Sobrino asserts that a proper relationship with reality demands, first that the subject engages reality with a spirit of honesty. Second, she ought to remain faithful to that original honesty. Third, that faithfulness should be "nurtured by an expectant and active hope that enables the subject to bear the cost of such perseverance"[394] and be carried by the 'more' of reality. I will return to each of these dispositions in more detail in the following sections. Here it suffices to say that Sobrino asserts that if history in general and life in particular are to constitute a promise that generates hope, the liberative transformation of that reality requires to live with 'spirit' in order to direct life and history toward positivity rather than negativity. That is, living with spirit is an active and enduring task of engaging reality. This implies that spirituality involves the integration of different elements (both theory and practice) of living adequately as human beings in history. He contends that 'living with spirit' in historical reality is the foundation of the spirituality demanded of *all* people.[395] Thus, spirituality is that fundamental "anthropological dimension that actualizes our capacity to encounter and mediate God's presence through our engagement of reality."[396] In this sense, the element of eternal truth must come to light in ever new ways corresponding to each

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[391] O. Ernesto Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation: Jon Sobrino's Christological Spirituality*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 70.

[392] Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), ix.

[393] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 677.

[394] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 98.

[395] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 236.

[396] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 91.

particular historical situation of the believer. The transcendent informs, structures, permeates, and seeks to transform the believer's historical reality in new ways. For a Christian in particular, spirituality means the following of Jesus in history; it is the actualization of the Spirit of Jesus in concrete historical circumstances.[397]

For Sobrino, the following of Jesus is twofold; it is both christological and pneumatological.[398] The christological dimension refers to the fundamental structure of Jesus' life, his incarnation, activity, mission, cross, and resurrection. As such a Christian ought to mirror that structure of life in her historical reality. I will return to this dimension in more detail in chapter four to articulate how the incarnational structure and praxis of Jesus' life informs a Christian's life and the Church's pastoral praxis toward social reconciliation. The second dimension of following Jesus is the pneumatological. It implies that the structure of Jesus's life and mission was shot through by the Spirit of God who filled and inspired his entire life and activity. The Spirit strengthened and enabled Jesus to actualize his fundamental orientation and mission in fulfilling his Father's will with regard to historical reality.[399] That same Spirit inspires and enables a Christian to faithfully follow Jesus in historical reality. This means that for a Christian the appropriation and actualization of the life of Jesus in the different historical circumstances is informed and guided by the Spirit. Historical reality puts the subject in immediate contact with conditions that render the manifestations of the Spirit possible, simply because, according to Sobrino historical reality is a graced reality. The Spirit informs the subject's spirituality and orients it in such way that the following of Jesus enables the transformation of the disciple and reality itself. As for this project's main focus, the negative side of history presents a challenge, content,

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[397] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, x.
[398] Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 328.
[399] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 121.

and as such a particular orientation for one's spirituality. Victims of history become the locus of Christian life.

Sobrino espouses a holistic understanding of spirituality which recognizes that the transcendent element is not directly accessible except in and through historical mediation.[400] That is, a spirituality grounded in historical reality encompasses the convergence of history and transcendence. For a Christian this implies that one cannot truly profess the risen Christ without following Jesus in history. In conflicted reality a spiritual life means collaborating with the Spirit of Jesus in 'ushering in' the reign of God in service to the victims of history, particularly with regard to justice. The foregoing discussion lays the foundation for the Sobrino's spirituality of liberation to which I now turn.

3.1.1 Sobrino's Spirituality of Liberation in Conflicted Reality

As alluded to above, the rationale for applying Sobrino's understanding of spirituality to Uganda's context is threefold: it offers a framework for understanding and responding to Uganda's sociopolitical, economic, and religious context, suggests ways of eradicating the suffering of victims, and provides insights into the process of social reconciliation. This threefold purpose can be inferred from the core of Sobrino's spirituality of liberation constituted by three dispositions: (1) Honesty with reality; (2) fidelity to the real, and (3), allowing oneself be carried by the 'more' of reality. While all these three dispositions form one organic whole, I will give particular emphasis to the first. The last two will be discussed in light of the first one. As will be illustrated later, the disposition of honesty to Uganda's sociopolitical, economic, and religious reality shapes the grasp of the conditions of victims, offers a way of nurturing a spirit of faithfulness to the original honesty, and fosters an active hope of transforming that reality through perseverance.

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[400] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 4.

3.1.1.1 Honesty with Reality

Sobrino contends that honesty with reality first and foremost refers to knowing *reality* as it truly *is*. The intellectual framework Sobrino deploys in his understanding and encountering of reality is influenced by the philosophical framework of his friend, the martyr Ignacio Ellacuría.[401] Ellacuría understands historical reality as the "maximum form of reality."[402] He speaks of reality as physical, concrete, material, open-ended, intrinsically dynamic, structured, and dialectical process in which higher forms emerge from lower ones. [403] For him historical reality contains elements of praxis that can lead to the truth of reality as well as to the truth of the interpretation of reality.[404] Ellacuría unifies elements of reality and history in such a way that historical reality comprises a dynamic realization and the unity underlying the various historical events.[405] This implies that historical reality contains a dynamic 'more,' that reality gives of itself in the process of actualization. There is a "transcendental dimension of reality that human persons encounter through their 'sentient intelligence'[406] and ultimately in their relationship with God."[407] That is, historical reality is the place where human actualization takes place. History constitutes the specific form of reality in which the human person is given the maximum disclosure of possibilities of the real. For Ellacuría, it is within history that the human person, in her freedom can respond to or reject God's self-communication and thus either make God's reign present in historical reality or not.[408]

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[401] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 70.

[402] Manuel Mejido C., "Ignacio Ellacuría's Philosophy of Historical Reality: Beyond the Hegelian-Marxian Dialectic and the Zubirian Radicalization of Scholastic Realism." *Philosophy & Theology* 18, no. 2 (September 22, 2006): 287, https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol200618214.

[403] Kevin F. Burke, *The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 59.

[404] Mejido C., "Ignacio Ellacuria's Philosophy of Historical Reality," 288.

[405] Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross*, 59.

[406] *Sentient intelligence* means that both senses and human intellect are codetermining in the apprehension and acquisition of knowledge of reality. *See* Ibid., 47.

[407] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 73.

[408] Ibid., 77–78.

In this sense, Ellacuría envisions a human person as one who is immersed in a dynamic historical reality. He further breaks down human knowledge and engagement with historical reality in a threefold framework; noetic, ethical, and transformative. For Ellacuría to "know" is to "engage" and "confront" reality: First, *noetically*, this involves realizing the weight of reality. Second, *ethically*, refers to shouldering or bearing the weight of reality. And third, *transformatively*, concerns taking charge of the weight of reality, that is, knowing that reality has a praxis-oriented dimension.[409] Therefore, the end purpose of human intelligence for Ellacuría is not only to grasp the meaning of reality in order to advance one's knowledge. Rather, first and foremost the apprehension of reality implies responding to its demands by transforming it towards the greatest possible realization.[410] From this understanding of reality, Sobrino grounds his spirituality in terms of the threefold dispositions of spirit; honesty with the real, faithfulness to the real, and being carried by the 'more' of reality.[411] It is worth noting that Sobrino develops the third disposition "which stresses the active presence of God's grace in reality" beyond what Ellacuría envisioned.[412]

To begin with, for Sobrino, one has to be *honest with the real* in a twofold act of spirit, namely, intellectually and practically.[413] Intellectually, honesty with reality means grasping the truth of concrete reality. It involves discerning the signs of the times recognizing the presence of grace and sin in reality. For him, this is the *theologal* character of reality. Knowing reality is accomplished by overcoming ignorance and indifference to reality, a process that involves confronting one's innate tendency to subvert truth in order to evade reality as it really is. Accepting the truth that reality reveals to us, is to allow reality to be, that which it is, and not subject it to our

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[409] Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross*, 100.
[410] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 80.
[411] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 241.
[412] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 85.
[413] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 236.

own preference and interests.[414] Sobrino realizes that human beings tend to conceal truth by means of a lie, which is an expression of human sinfulness. Thus, he identifies the need for an act of "conversion" in even the most basic way of understanding reality as it really is. [415] He contends that we need to have a "converted intelligence…that identifies as its primary interest the objective service of reality."[416] That is to say, our seeing and understanding of reality ought to serve the truth of reality *as it really is*, rather than distort it to our own advantage.

In Uganda's context, *honesty with the real* enables one to grasp the underlying roots of oppression, exclusion, and violence. This implies consciously examining the negative impact of ethnic ideology, and all its sociopolitical and economic manifestations that have caused the suffering of tens of thousands of victims. As chapter one demonstrated, the pervasiveness of negative ethnic ideology undergirds the deconstruction of human identity in terms of 'difference and otherness.' Negative ethnic ideology is at the heart of exclusive ethnic relations and oppressive sociopolitical and economic structures. It is thus crucial that every citizen's attention be drawn to the narratives, discourses, and representations that construct conflictual ethnic identities that benefit the political elite who construe the 'ethnic other' as the enemy. Honesty to reality requires recognizing and identifying the deeply entrenched processes of differentiation and othering within public discourse, sociopolitical, and economic arrangements. This means that the prevalence of negative stereotyping should explicitly be named, and the ethnically based sociopolitical systems and structures that dehumanize the 'ethnic other' be confronted.

Essential to being honest to Uganda's reality, is the realization that the suffering of victims of ethnic violence and exclusion is a consequence of deliberate human attitudes, practices, and

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[414] Ibid., 237.
[415] Jon Sobrino, *Where Is God: Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).
[416] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 15.

structures of injustice. This realization demands action in service of justice for victims. As Sobrino suggests the conversion of intelligence requires a recognition of the presence and causes of *death* in historical reality.[417] This conversion to the truth of reality demands a response that intends to transform that reality towards life, thus, "denying its [life's] negation and fostering its positivity."[418] In other words, making reality "formally present to the human person, sentient intelligence enables us to honestly forge ways of responding to what reality requires from us."[419]

Conversion of intelligence also means that one recognizes the presence of grace in historical reality. Here I make particular reference to the presence of Christ among victims. The General Conference at Puebla (1979) has expressed this relation stating that Christ "lives within his Church…with particular tenderness he chose to identify himself with those who are poorest and weakest" (Matt 25:40). [420] Puebla establishes a universal correlation between Jesus and the poor which implies that to know Jesus one has to know the poor. Puebla identifies a principle of predilection in Christ, namely, the poor/victims take a preferential attention in the life of Christ. This relation between Christ and the poor establishes the preferential option for them, solidarity with them, and their evangelization.[421] In chapter four, I will further develop this idea in my discussion of Sobrino's incarnational vision. Sobrino asserts the "poor are a sort of sacrament of the presence of Christ." [422] Drawing near to victims helps one encounter Christ himself.

Second, *practically*, honesty with reality means responding to the demands made by the reality of victims. This means that one who grasps the truth of reality as it is, should at the same

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[417] Todd Walatka, "Uniting Spirituality and Theology: Jon Sobrino's Seeking Honesty with the Real," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 13, no. 1 (2013): 79.

[418] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 17.

[419] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 73.

[420] Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, *CELAM III: Third Conference of the Latin American Bishops: Puebla, Mexico* (Notre Dame, IN: National Conference of Catholic Bishop, Washington D.C., 1979), no.196.

[421] Ibid., 178.

[422] Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 21.

time make a corresponding response/re-action to transform that reality for the better.[423] Sobrino realizes that the first step in responding to reality involves a certain *passivity* and *activity*. Passivity means that one must immerse and allow herself to be affected by historical reality; and activity refers to the *action* that intends to transform that reality. This twofold response comprises the following of Jesus by drawing close to victims in solidarity with them. While the closeness helps unveil the causes of suffering and the nature of oppression, action requires to expose who the oppressors are, and laying open the mechanisms of their oppression. Making the preferential option for the poor involves acting on their behalf particularly in alleviating their suffering by fighting for justice. For Sobrino, this practical response toward the condition of suffering constitutes a reaction of mercy. As I will illustrate later, Sobrino asserts that mercy is the first and last reaction to the suffering of victims. In the next section, I discuss the *principle* of mercy with which a disciple adequately responds to the condition of victims and confronts sinful reality in the following of Jesus.

3.1.1.2 Honesty with Reality: The Reaction of Mercy

Sobrino asserts that when one encounters, gets immersed into suffering, and becomes affected by the condition of victims, she also comes face to face with an imperative to transform that reality in order to bring life to the victims. For Sobrino, the first and last *re-action* to reality marked by suffering is *mercy*.[424] For him, mercy is not reduced to mere 'acts of mercy,' or to an affective movement of emotions, although this may accompany it; rather, mercy is *a principle.* By the principle, Sobrino wants to capture the fundamental human essence that defines and structures one's whole being and from which one interprets and reacts to the suffering of another. For him, the principle of mercy is precisely that "love which while standing at the origin of a process, also

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[423] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 236.
[424] Ibid., 237.

remains present and active throughout the process, endowing it with a particular direction and shaping the various elements that compose it."[425] In other words, mercy signifies a specific "praxic love that swells within a person" in the face of another's suffering, "driving its subject to eradicate that suffering for no other reason than that it [the suffering] exists," and "in conviction that, in this reaction to the ought-not-be of another's suffering, one's own being hangs in a balance."[426] This implies that one interiorizes the suffering of another, so that the subject inescapably responds to that suffering in order to eradicate it. [427] In other words, the interiorization of suffering elicits an impulse and intent to eliminate that suffering. Hence, mercy includes two dimensions, first an inward compassion or sympathy and second, an active movement toward eradication of suffering.[428] For Sobrino, mercy is the primordial act of spirit. [429] It defines what it means to be human. "Mercy is that in terms of which all dimensions of the human being acquire meaning without which nothing else attains to human status."[430] This implies that through the practice of mercy the human being is perfected and made whole. I must add that, I interpret Sobrino's claim here to be more contextual than generic. It specifies mercy as a fundamental disposition and response to the suffering of another by which the ethical, political, economic, and spiritual dimensions are oriented and ordered in order to transform historical reality toward holistic human flourishing.

For Sobrino, mercy is also a divine attribute. It is the basic principle of the activity of God and the life and mission of Jesus. [431] As the next section will demonstrate, Sobrino maintains that

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[425] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 16.
[426] Ibid., 18.
[427] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 237–38.
[428] Todd Walatka, "The Principle of Mercy: Jon Sobrino and the Catholic Theological Tradition," *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016): 105.
[429] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 238.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Ibid., 237.

in the Bible mercy typifies who God is. In particular, the gospels evince that mercy personifies Jesus himself, who so often reacts to the suffering of another after being "moved with compassion."[432]

In sum, it becomes evident that for Sobrino, honesty with the real elicits a reaction of mercy as the ultimate reaction to the suffering of another. It is the first and last of all reactions. In the next section I will explore mercy from a biblical point of view. Later in the third section, I will demonstrate that from this biblical foundation, I can make a claim that the principle *and* exercise of mercy has necessarily a humanizing potential: It fundamentally constitutes what it means to be human and a disciple of Jesus. In its exercise mercy has humanizing efficacy for the victim, oppressor, and the other. Ultimately mercy structures the mission of the church.[433] Therefore, the next section illustrates two aspects: (1) Mercy is an attribute of God. (2) Jesus of Nazareth is God's mercy incarnate and the authentic human being, and as such mercy was the fundamental disposition and structure of his life and mission.

SECTION II: CONCEPT OF MERCY IN THE BIBLE

3.2 Mercy as a Principle: Its Manifestation in the Activity of God

I propose expanding Sobrino's notion of mercy to show the biblical foundation of the same. This exploration intends to establish three interrelated claims that; first, *being, relating,* and *acting* with mercy establishes one's likeness to God (cf Matt 5:48 in chapter two), and thus constitutes what it means to be human in general and Christian in particular. Second, the disposition and exercise of mercy has a humanizing potential for persons and communities. Third, mercy should necessarily structure the Church's mission of social reconciliation in our conflicted

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[432] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 238.
[433] Walatka, "The Principle of Mercy: Jon Sobrino and the Catholic Theological Tradition," 97.

world.

I first demonstrate that in the Old Testament mercy can be understood as a divine attribute by which God is known through his [*sic*] activity. I have to note here that the way the Old Testament sometimes depicts Yahweh is anything but merciful. For instance, in the Passover, the destruction of the Egyptian firstborn (cf Exodus 11-19), in the later wars and conquest of the Canaanites, which were basically a combination of ethnic cleansing and genocide (cf Deut 20), the notion of a merciful God is difficult to decipher. While these texts require deep historical-critical analysis and interpretation, I am selectively retrieving the theme of mercy rather than unproblematically reporting an uncomplicated biblical testimony to divine mercy. Second, I illustrate that God's mercy became incarnate in historical reality in the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the *par excellence* embodiment of God's mercy in historical reality.

3.2.1 Mercy the Primordial Attribute of God

The notion of *mercy* as expressed in the Bible has wide ranging meanings captured in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin terms that do not fully correspond to its English expression(s). In the Old Testament there are several Hebrew words that express this concept among them are; *rḥm and reḥem,* (and their derivatives).[434] I will show that these terms depicting God's mercy, are found in different passages of the Old Testament. Likewise, the New Testament has several Greek terms that signify mercy for instance, *eleos, oiktirmos, splanchnizomai* and others, all with different nuances.[435] In Latin the term often used is *misercordia.* From these terms biblical scholars find difficulty in determining the most precise expressions of the notion of mercy in the English language, precisely because the Hebrew and Greek terms have a wide range of meanings that may depend on combinations of verbal and nominal forms as well as context. In the English, there are

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[434] Ronald Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2018), 3.
[435] Johannes Bauer, ed., *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology*, vol. 2 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1970), 574.

a range of terms used, as I will later illustrate. The space in this project however, cannot sufficiently give a fair treatment of the scope and depth of each of these terms in either Hebrew or Greek. I will give a few examples of the (transliterated) terms below, particularly the Hebrew language since it offers a more comprehensive understanding of the concept.

First, in Hebrew *mercy* derives from the root *rḥm*.[436] This root is common to all Semitic languages.[437] I will mention only a few examples: In Akkadian it appears as *rêmu,* which means both "compassion" and "womb." In Ugaritic, the verb form of *rḥm* refers to "showing compassion," while its noun implies being "compassionate," or "loving" to someone. In Imperial Aramaic *rḥm* occurs several times in legal formula where it denotes a "wish," whereas its other derivatives refer to; love, accept (someone), be thankful, be satisfied (with someone). In Palestinian Aramaic, the verb form of *rḥm* expresses active compassion. The frequent occurrence of the root appears to suggest the importance of the notion of mercy in these Semitic cultures. The way the notion of mercy is understood in these cultures has implications to its usage in the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly as applied to the relation between Yhwh and human beings.

In the Old Testament, the subject of *rḥm* is often Yhwh, and used as an attribute of God.[438] In instances where the subject appears to be either a mother (as in Isaiah 49:15) or a father (as in Ps 103:13a), both metaphors refer to Yahweh as the subject.[439] The object of *rḥm* is the people of Israel (for instance in Hos 1:7 and Ezekiel 39:25). Other examples include Jeremiah 12:15; 33:26b where *rḥm* expresses a concrete action of bringing Israel back to the homeland. Titles such as "merciful' and 'gracious' (Ps 103:8) express *rḥm* as inherent to the nature of Yhwh as well as

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[436] Johannes Bauer, 574.

[437] U. Dahmen, "Rḥm; Raḥamîm; Raḥûm; Raḥamānî," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 438.

[438] Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2014), 131.

[439] Dahmen, "Rḥm; Raḥamîm; Raḥûm; Raḥamānî," 440.

God's reaction to human weakness.

Prophet Hosea depicts the divine merciful attribute in the imagery of a symbolic marriage between Hosea and Gomer and her three children (Hosea 1:2-3:5).[440] When Israel frequently breaks the covenant relationship God continually shows mercy toward the unfaithful people. Symbolically the Lord commands Hosea to buy back Gomer as an image of the Lord's future restoration of the relationship with Israel. This symbolic and prophetic action of Hosea (3:1-3) "represents the Lord's steadfast love and faithfulness that counters Israel's unfaithfulness."[441] Even though the Lord is justifiably angry with Israel's unfaithfulness, the Lord's anger is capable of being retrained. In this sense, the Lord's anger is designed to correct Israel's disobedience and elicit piety. This is because Israel is the Lord's child whom Yhwh called to himself [*sic*] and the Lord's actions toward her are compatible with that parental attitude.[442] The justification God gives for such a merciful reaction toward Israel's disobedience is; "For I am God and not mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath" (Hos 11:9). In a sense, because of the Yhwh's merciful nature the Lord decides to appease his[*sic*] blazing wrath and responds with mercy. This attitude discloses the profundity of divine mercy and God's sovereignty that surpasses human limitations.

Moreover, *rḥm* is associated with actions within the social realm, only rarely is its object a single individual.[443] Practically, *rḥm* comprises Yhwh's active compassion, showing mercy, pardon, forgiveness, comfort, pity, strengthen, and saving work among other action-oriented activity toward the people of Israel.[444] It has to be noted however, that *rḥm* is not entirely identical

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[440] W. Edward Glenny, *Hosea: A Commentary Based on Hosea in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint commentary series (Boston: Brill, 2013), 68.
[441] Ibid., 83.
[442] Ibid., 158.
[443] Dahmen, "Rḥm; Raḥamîm; Raḥûm; Raḥamānî," 451.
[444] Ibid.

to any of these terms. As alluded to above, these meanings derive from its combination with other verbs so that it is given concrete meaning in particular contexts. Nevertheless, *rḥm* depicts a fundamental attitude/disposition that takes effect in these various actions. In addition, Yhwh's actions presuppose a situation of weakness, suffering, or affliction with the possibility of alleviating or even eradicating that condition. That is to say, showing mercy is an essential element of God's nature in relation with human beings[445] as shown in Israel's history particularly in the Exodus event.

Exodus 3:7-8 expresses Yhwh's merciful response to the suffering of Israel in the land of Egypt in terms of liberative justice. Later in the book, Exodus 34:5-7 most explicitly expresses God's mercy. Biblical scholar Nuria Calduch-Benages suggests that scholars consider this passage to be the best definition of Yhwh's merciful attitude in the whole of the Old Testament.[446] It presents one of Israel's earliest religious experience of Yahweh as a gracious and merciful God. Verse 34:6 describes God as "slow to anger, and abounding in love and fidelity, continuing his love for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin." Verse 34:7 shows that Israel's understanding of God as merciful and forgiving, is also conscious of divine justice: "Yet not declaring the guilty guiltless, but bringing punishment for their parents' wickedness on children and children's children to the third and fourth generation." While Israel understood mercy as a divine attribute, she would by no means indicate that the guilty have impunity. Nevertheless, the understanding of Yahweh as merciful stresses the close relationship that unites God to human beings; a relationship marked by divine goodness and tenderness with Yahweh's readiness to forgive human shortcomings.

The second term that implies mercy is *reḥem*. It signifies maternal womb, the place where

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[445] Ibid., 453.
[446] Nuria Calduch-Benages, "Visceral Mercy," *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 8, 2016, 14.

life originates. [447] This term derives from the root *rḥm* whose basic meaning is 'womb.' Other derivatives such as "to be merciful," "compassionate," and others originate from this basic meaning. This suggests that maternal instinct is the model of mercy. *Reḥem* in the plural, *rahamîm*, designates the actual visceral, and is used in a symbolic sense to express the instinctive attachment of one being to another in love and compassion. Calduch-Benages claims that in "Semitic anthropology this intimate and profound feeling of love and compassion is localized in the viscera, in the maternal womb."[448] In this regard, God addresses the city of Jerusalem in terms of this maternal imagery; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?" (Isaiah 49:15). This suggests that the concept of mercy includes deep human emotions.

The third term (that appears in the New Testament) is the noun *splànchna.* It derives from the verb *splanchnizomai* that implies deep emotion, showing mercy, and compassion. As I will later illustrate in the treatment of Jesus' mercy, *splanchnizomai* is used to describe Jesus' deep reaction when facing the suffering of others.

Fourth, the Latin Vulgate uses *misercordia* to capture the notion of mercy.[449] Etymologically, (*miseri,* poor, and *cor,* heart,) it suggests that one has her heart with the poor, or the suffering, or those in distress.[450] This term often implies compassion, pity, sympathy or clemency all of which suggest some degree of emotional, psychological or mental participation in the suffering or distress of another.[451] Walter Kasper explains that there is a sense in which one who exercises *misericordia* has come to internalize the suffering of another and thus reacts to that

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[447] Nuria Calduch-Benages, "Visceral Mercy," *L'Osservatore Romano* (Rome, Italy, January 8, 2016), 14.
[448] Calduch-Benages, "Visceral Mercy," 14.
[449] Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters*, 6.
[450] Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, xii.
[451] Ibid.

suffering with the resolve to transform it.[452]

In sum, from this brief lexical exploration of the notion of mercy, it appears that mercy defines God's core identity as the Merciful-One. It articulates the notion of mercy as a divine attribute from which God's activity and intimate relation to Israel emerge. In the history of Israel mercy is by means of which Yhwh came to be known in [his] divine activity. Mercy constitutes "unmerited loving kindness, friendliness, favor, and grace."[453] It establishes a relationship that characterizes not a single action, rather an enduring disposition and stance between God and the people.

Second, the notion of mercy has a social dimension. It is not only an attitude/disposition of God; mercy is also an action-oriented movement toward the eradication of the suffering of victims. In this sense, Sobrino's principle of mercy appears to accord with the biblical concept of the same, particularly as captured in the root *rḥm* and its derivatives. In the next section I will demonstrate that God's mercy is most expressly revealed in God's liberative activity particularly the predilection for victims and solidarity with them. That is to say, the revelation of God's divine attribute as *merciful* occurs in a condition of suffering, which consequently leads to the establishment of a covenant to guarantee God's presence and protection over the people of Israel.

3.2.1.1 God's Liberative Activity and Partiality to Victims

As Sobrino states, the term mercy may not be explicitly stated in every text of the Bible. However, the efficacy of God's mercy can be deduced from Yahweh's activity throughout Israel's religious experience. Mercy is the effective undercurrent of Yahweh's attitude and activity in the history of Israel. In other words, mercy is *a principle* that defines who Yhwh is to Israel, and by which God comes to be known. The liberation from the land of Egypt and subsequent

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[452] Ibid., 23.
[453] Ibid., 43.

establishment of the covenant relationship on Mount Sinai is closely linked to Yhwh's intent to draw closer to the Jewish people.[454] The ratification of the covenant demonstrates God's commitment to protect them: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God; and you will know that I, the LORD, am your God who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exodus 6:7). The covenant bond that establishes God's solidarity with victims of oppression is a consequence of both their condition and God's merciful nature. Kasper notes that although at this point in the Exodus event the term "mercy" has not yet explicitly appeared, nevertheless, that which mercy signifies is already present in God's self-revelation and activity toward the misery of the people of Israel. [455]

As alluded to above, Kasper also explains that the understanding of God's mercy in the Old Testament is most articulated in the activity of God toward the suffering of the Jewish people.[456] In the Exodus event God decides to intervene in the misery of Israel. The justification God gives for the intervention is; "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore, I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey…" (Exodus 3:7-8). In a manner of speaking, victims/poor (*miseri*) moved the heart (*cor*) of God toward a liberative action. God whose divine attribute is *mercy* decides to intervene and liberate Israel from exile. [457] In this regard Sobrino states that "in Exodus, God is the one who listens to the cry of the people in order to set them free and form them into a nation and make them God's people."[458] Earlier in Exodus 2:23-24, God hears their cry and remembers his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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[454] Ibid., 46.
[455] Ibid., 48.
[456] Ibid., 56.
[457] Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters*, 27.
[458] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 69.

Then in 3:6 Yhwh identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's past covenantal relationship with Israel is the context of his liberation of them from their present suffering.

Sobrino asserts in the Old Testament the Exodus is the founding event that shows God preference toward an oppressed people.[459] Sobrino realizes that "God's partiality to victims in virtue of the sheer fact of their being victims, the active defense mounted by God in their behalf, and the liberative divine design in their regard"[460] constitutes the very identity of who God is as the Merciful One. Kasper also notes that in the Exodus event, the revelation of God's name to Moses is bound to the condition of suffering of God's people.[461] That is, the fundamental revelation of God to Israel on Mount Sinai is connected with the revelation of God's mercy executed through God's justice in the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. In this sense, Yhwh's name "I am who am" (cf Exodus 3:14) is linked to the condition of victimhood. In other words, the condition of suffering becomes the locus of the theophany. For the Jewish people God's mercy is not speculative or a result of some form of mystical religious experience. Rather, it is based on Israel's faith experience of Yhwh's liberative activity from a condition of suffering. Moreover, the covenant relationship that expresses Yhwh's intent to choose Israel for himself (Exodus 19:5-6),[462] affirms God's commitment and nearness to them in a way that binds both parties into an enduring relationship.[463]

Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez echoes this loving and merciful identity of God in his comment on 1 John 4:8. He states that in the statement "God is love," "John sums up the

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[459] Ibid., 82.
[460] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 17.
[461] Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 46.
[462] Daniel M. Gurtner, *Exodus: A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 367.
[463] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 33.

biblical revelation about God."[464] This loving and merciful essence of God enduringly attends and devotes itself to the suffering of humanity in ever new ways in history. Thus, "mercy expresses God's operative and active love (*caritas operative et effectiva*)."[465] As such, it has significant implications for God's people throughout generations. The unsolicited mercy of God anticipates a corresponding response in the human beneficiaries. Hence, being merciful to fellow human beings establishes likeness to God in such a way that mercy is a defining aspect of being God's people. In practice mercy is expressed in terms of justice and to do what is right and kind particularly toward the vulnerable. For this reason, God's people ought to make the option for the poor/victim that reflects God's merciful attitude and activity toward them.

3.2.1.2 Preferential Option for the Poor: Israel's Response for the Mercy of God

Several passages in the Bible (Leviticus 19:15; Psalms 82:3-4; 140:12; Proverbs 14:31; Isaiah 58:6-10; Amos 4:1) paint a picture that decries the cruel situation of spoliation and abuse in which the poor reside.[466] This suffering of victims elicits God's merciful response and activity in form of justice. The message of the prophets constantly reminded Israel of God's predilection for the poor and the demand to exercise justice. God's attitude, special care, and commitment toward Israel while she was a victim in Egypt, establishes a demand for Israel to act with just toward those in circumstances similar to her former condition of victimhood. The Scriptures require Israel to take special care of the suffering people in her midst.[467] This response implied (1) taking the side of the oppressed as a theocentric option,[468] (2) confronting the forces of oppression.

First, the preferential option for the victims is based on the fact that they are in greater need

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[464] Ibid., 1.
[465] Cf Aquinas Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1969), pt.I, 21 a.3.
[466] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 238.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 29.

of liberation. They thus attract God's merciful attitude and activity – literary, God's heart is moved by their misery (*misericordia*). Gustavo Gutiérrez maintains that God's love necessarily includes the divine predilection for history's last. Gutierrez calls this preferential option for the last "a theocentric option." [469] God's love and predilection take preference for the weak and abused of human history.[470] This option manifests God's gratuitous love. The rationale for paying particular attention to the vulnerable with special reference to the widow, orphan, and stranger (Exodus 22:21-24) is because of the condition of suffering. That condition should elicit an active response for Israel that reflects God's reaction to the suffering of victims and to alleviate that suffering. The commitment to this option is based on faith in God. "It is a theocentric, prophetic option that strikes its roots deep in the gratuity of God's love and is demanded by that love."[471]

Second, confronting the forces of oppression is particularly evident among prophets who point the finger of blame at those responsible for the deplorable conditions of the poor. Prophets denounce the social injustice that comprises the exploitation of the weak, as contrary to God's will. In such circumstances, prophets demand liberative action. The texts are many, for instance, prophet Amos uses harsh words to denounce the exploitation of the vulnerable, perversion of justice, and oppression of the weak (Amos 2:6-8).[472] Amos' criticism is directed to the easy-living of the elite who exploit the poor in order to afford comfort (6:1-14). Part of the ethical demand that the prophets reiterated was that the people of Israel ought to become a mirror image of God in their defense against the forces of oppression. God's caring attitude, stance, and activity for persons who, because of ill-fated circumstances demonstrates the God's preference for them. In the New Testament God's predilection and liberative activity toward the weak and marginalized

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[469] Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," 239.
[470] Ibid., 240.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 57.

becomes personified in the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. As I will later elaborate, God's preference for victims is evident in Jesus' identification with the weakest of his brothers and sisters (Matt 25) and the fact that the proclamation of the God's reign is first directed to them (cf Luke 4:18).[473]

3.2.2 God's Mercy Incarnate: Person and Mission of Jesus of Nazareth

In this section, I articulate two aspects; first that in Jesus God's primordial mercy became incarnate, thus God's nearness to victims is historicized. Second, in Jesus one finds the authentic human being, that is, the prototype of what it means to be truly human is revealed.

First, in the New Testament as Sobrino states, the "primordial mercy of God" appears concretely in Jesus of Nazareth."[474] And that mercy most clearly defines Jesus' life and activity. In Jesus one finds "God's radical drawing near in love and for love."[475] God does not stay above the messiness of human condition; rather in Jesus God immerses into the center of human reality and sin, even when this led him to the Cross.[476] I will further develop this point in chapter four in my discussion of Sobrino's incarnational vision. It will focus on "the structure of Jesus' life as the structure of incarnation," that is, "becoming real flesh in real historical reality" [477] in living out the mission of mercy.

Sobrino argues that whether or not the word 'mercy' is explicitly expressed in every gospel account, it is at the core of Jesus' disposition and praxis.[478] In particular, God's liberative mercy is manifested in Jesus' activity toward those on the margins of society, the widow, orphan, sick,

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[473] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 29.
[474] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 17.
[475] Ibid., 132.
[476] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 244–45.
[477] Stephen J. Pope, "On Not 'Abandoning the Historical World to Its Wretchedness:' A Prophetic Voice Serving and Incarnational Vision," in *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino's Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 49.
[478] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 15.

poor, blind, the weak, and all those stripped of human dignity because of their condition. In their presence Jesus is 'moved with compassion' and acts to eradicate their condition.[479] Mercy shaped Jesus' life and mission and also ultimately sealed his fate.[480] As Sobrino puts it, "Jesus' life meant *taking on the sin of the world.*" Taking on the sin of the world leads to "*rising again* and *raising again*, bestowing on others, life, hope, and gladness."[481] In the following Jesus, being honest to the historical reality comprises drawing near to the condition of victims. This has a potential of offering them an active hope through liberative action in form of justice.

Second, the fundamental Christian faith profession is that in the person, life, and mission of Jesus of Nazareth, both God and the authentic human person are revealed. Here I focus on three ways in which Jesus expressed mercy that are normative to what it means to be human. These three ways are consistent with the nature of Yhwh's merciful attitude and action in the Old Testament. They include, (1) drawing near to the condition of the poor, (2) acts to eradicate their suffering, (3) confronting the structures of oppression. These three aspects are particularly important because they constitute (as I will demonstrate) what I understand as 'the humanizing (becoming truly human and humane) efficacy of the practice of mercy' in Uganda's society. This understanding is founded on the notion that authentic human living is mapped on being "like Jesus."[482]

First, Jesus's drawing near to the condition of those on the margins gave him a vantage point from which to understand the causes of their exclusion and oppression. From the perspective of the poor/victims, Jesus grasped the truth of concrete reality and practically responded to the demands of that reality. For instance, the gospel according to Luke reveals Jesus' predilection of the poor as the primary recipients of the message of liberation[483] (cf Luke 4:18). Jesus drew near

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[479] Ibid., 19–20.; Jesus the Liberator 90-91; Where is God? 83
[480] Ibid., 17.
[481] Ibid., 15.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, 111.

to certain groups of persons generally labelled 'sinners'[484] some of whom became his associates. His basic attitude toward them was to welcome them and not act as a harsh judge.[485] Here I need to clarify the types of "sinners" Jesus encountered.

Sobrino notes that one type of sinners comprised the weak and those despised by the ruling society. In this category were those called 'sinners' from the perspective of human weakness and others legally labelled as such according to the dominant religious view.[486] These included prostitutes, the simple-minded, the little ones or least (Matt 11:25), and those who carried despicable tasks.[487] The second category comprises what Sobrino calls the "oppressors". For him, "their basic sin consists in oppressing, placing intolerable burdens on others, and acting unjustly."[488] In this group were the ruling aristocracy and religious establishment. For instance, Jesus warns his disciples about the influence of Sadducees and Pharisees (Matt 16:12).

Associated with the category of oppressors were those who collaborated with oppressive power structures; for instance, the publicans (Mark 2:15-17) or tax collectors (Matthew 9:9-11, Luke 5:27-32). Jesus' attitude and closeness to them often stunned people. For instance, when Jesus went and stayed at the house of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), some of the people were shocked that he had gone "to stay at the house of a sinner" (Luke 19:7). Although Jesus welcomed and

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[484] John R. Donahue, "Tax Collectors and Sinners: An Attempt at Identification," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1971): 39. In this article Donahue notes that critical opinion has been divided over the identification of 'sinners' in the New Testament. He finds two distinct categories to which the term sinner was used; first, as applied to Jews it was those whose occupations compromised the rules of ritual piety (tax collectors, camel drivers, donkey riders, shepherds…) and those who lived morally disreputable lifestyles in the eyes of the Pharisees (bath attendants, peddlers, tailors, barbers…) and others who had contact with pagans, namely the Jews who made themselves Gentiles by their neglect of the demands of the law. Second, the Gentiles, who were considered godless, for whom there was no hope of salvation. Donahue suggests that it appears that Jesus' association with such groups of the disdained, hated, despised, literary, those on the margins, gives a clue why he was handed over to Roman (pagan) authorities for crucifixion. Jesus was counted among "sinners" (cf Isaiah 53:12). In short, the term 'sinner' refers to the "Jews who made themselves like Gentiles. In this sense Jesus had made himself like a Gentile, by associating with dishonest people. Here it appears this term "sinner" as used in the New Testament has some level of ambiguity.
[485] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 96.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid., 80.
[488] Ibid., 96.

offered the possibility of salvation to all the different groups, he took a very different approach to each group.[489] For the oppressors, Jesus demands radical conversion that comprises cessation of oppressing the weak.

While Sobrino's discourse focuses on the above two groups, I would like to add a third category. This is because Jesus' attitude and exercise of mercy was not limited only to these two groups. It surpassed them. The third category that is crucial to a process of social reconciliation in Uganda's sociopolitical and economic context (as chapter one illustrated) is the 'outsider' or 'ethnic other.' In the context of the gospels such category included Gentiles who were considered godless or apostates like the Samaritans whom Jesus welcomed. The Gospel according to John 4:7-42 recounts Jesus' encounter and conversation with the woman of Samaria at the well. According to Jewish cultural and religious sensitivities of Jesus' time the Samaritan woman was a marginal figure. In the exchange between Jesus and the woman, she gradually recognizes him as prophet and invites him to her town where he stays for several days. This encounter eventually leads her to faith in Jesus and of many of the people in her own town (John 4:42). Several passages in the gospels attest to Jesus' engagement and welcoming of Gentiles. In the Gospel of Mark 7:26-30 Jesus heals the daughter of a Greek Syrophoenician woman, while Matthew 8:5-13 has an account of the healing of the servant of the Roman centurion. The fourth chapter that focuses on Sobrino's incarnational vision as the hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion for social reconciliation will further elaborate how these categories correspond to Uganda's sociopolitical and economic context. Here it suffices to say that Jesus' drawing near and welcoming of all groups of people allowed him to be honest to reality; recognizing the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious structures that underlay the formation of such categories. In particular, in his

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[489] Ibid., 97.

engagement with the poor Jesus interiorized and absorbed their condition in his innards.[490]

Ultimately, mercy was the basic attitude and its exercise the characteristic reaction of his life and activity toward them.

Second, all the four gospels demonstrate the action-oriented dimension of Jesus' mercy. He performed deeds for those in need to eradicate their suffering.[491] First and foremost the deprived often approached Jesus asking for mercy: "Have *mercy* on me, Lord" (cf Matthew 15:22 17:15). Sobrino and biblical scholar Ronald Witherup note that the Greek verb *splanchnizomai,* to "have compassion or pity" expresses profound human emotions or feelings that lie deep in the human experience of empathy (Matt 9:36, 14:14).[492] As alluded to above, Sobrino notes that the word comes from *splànchna,* meaning "innards," or "entrails." In manner of speaking, "a compassionate person's entrails wrench at the sight of keen suffering in others."[493] In other words, the compassion of which the gospels speak is constitutive of the core identity of Jesus and that it is not merely an aspect of his psychology in relation to others.

Both Sobrino and Witherup again note that in the Bible this verb *splanchnizomai*, applied to Jesus is often restricted to God. This suggests that Jesus acts in a similar compassionate manner in which God is described in the Old Testament.[494] It appears that Jesus' activity is analogous to God's liberative activity in the Old Testament. Just as Yahweh is described as being moved with compassion and comes down to liberate Israel, similarly Jesus acts with mercy in the accordance with the dictates of that compassion in his miracles.[495]

Biblical scholar Hans Dieter Betz argues that in the synoptic tradition the Christology of

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[490] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 132.
[491] Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters*, 46–7.
[492] Ibid., 47.
[493] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 132.
[494] Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters*, 47.
[495] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 132.

Jesus' miracles reveals his compassion as the underlying motive for performing them; for instance in Mark 1:41, Matthew 9:36 among others.[496] For the purpose of eradicating misery Jesus engaged in healings (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 4:30-41; 17:11-19), exorcisms (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-20), feeding of the hungry (Matt 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 6:31-44), raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17; 8:43-48; John 11:38-44). Miracles were *signs* of the coming of God's reign through the exercise of mercy. In all his activities it becomes evident that the central aim of Jesus' activity is the restoration of human wholeness to what God intended it to be. As noted above, in some instances the restoration of the human person demanded conversion. In the case of the oppressor, the demand to stop laying heavy burdens on others would offer a possibility of being saved.[497] Sobrino notes that the gospels do not tell us whether Jesus was successful in this endeavor. They briefly refer to the change of attitude of Levi (Matt 9:9, Mk 2:14) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) as examples of what a new orientation for oppressors looks like. As chapter four will demonstrate, God does not close the possibility of conversion to the oppressor.

Third, Jesus confronted the very structures of injustice and exploitation. Biblical scholar Ulrich Luz demonstrates that among other passages in the Bible Matthew 21:1-24:2 portrays Jesus' great reckoning with Israel's hostile leaders and institutions.[498] And that the confrontations with his opponents are expressed in controversial dialogues (Matt 21:15-17, 23-27, 22:15-46), polemic parables (21:28-22:14), and woes and judgments (Matt 23). This indicates that Jesus' exercise of mercy involved contentions with particular groups of persons. Thus, Jesus'approach encompassed all categories of people and opened the possibility of salvation for all.[499]

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[496] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 613.

[497] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 97.

[498] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1.

[499] Anna Rebecca Solevag, "Zacchaeus in the Gospel of Luke: Comic Figure, Sinner, and Included Other," *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 14, no. 2 (July 1, 2020): 225–26, accessed May 3, 2021, http://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?.

Moreover, Jesus even subordinates religious observance to the exercise of mercy. For instance, in Mark 3:4 Jesus 'unlawfully' heals a person with a withered hand on a Sabbath. As Sobrino notes, it was for this reason that the Pharisees and Herodians plotted how they might destroy him.[500] Likewise, in Mark 2:23-28, the Pharisees question him why his disciples plucked corn on a Sabbath when they were hungry. Jesus' response is in defense of the primacy of mercy: "The Sabbath was made for the human being, and not the human being for the Sabbath." Here it appears that a reaction with mercy toward human need by the alleviation of suffering surpasses everything. That is to say, no system or laws should stand in the way of exercising mercy. Tragically, practicing mercy was one of the causes of Jesus' fateful end.

In sum, Jesus not only proclaimed the message of his Father's mercy, he embodied it in his salvific activity and ultimately lived it unto the Cross. Mercy defined and structured the whole of his life and mission. Jesus the incarnate mercy of God did not evade the messiness of historical reality; he immersed himself into the very conditions that gave him a vantage point to know and be affected by the sin of the world. Second, moved with compassion he engaged in the eradication of human oppression and suffering. Third, the exercise of mercy brought him into conflict with religiopolitical and cultural structures that eventually sealed his fate. His life and mission proclaimed God's mercy for all in an ultimate way.

Jesus' disposition and activity have implications for human beings in general and Christians in particular. Just as Jesus embodied the mercy of the heavenly Father so should the disciples of Jesus take on his likeness in their engagement with historical reality. This suggests that "to be like Jesus (the authentic human being) who is the true likeness of the heavenly Parent"[501] is the profoundest way of being truly human. Sobrino argues that the elevation of mercy

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[500] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 19.
[501] Ibid.

to the status of a principle is no trivial thing. This is because according to him, without mercy there is no humanity or divinity. In the next section, I articulate the view that mercy is a humanizing principle that establishes a person's true likeness to Jesus.

SECTION III: THE HUMANIZING EFFICACY OF THE PRINCIPLE AND EXERCISE OF MERCY

3.3 Re-Interpreting Sobrino's Principle and Exercise of Mercy in a Context of Ethnic Alienation

It is important to reiterate the guiding questions of this project, namely; *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be; *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do in social relations. Following Sobrino, I have demonstrated that the principle of mercy defined and structured the life and mission of Jesus. Correspondingly, the following points emerge as implications for the disciples of Jesus and the Church's mission. The principle of mercy first of all defines the life of the disciple and what it means to be human; second its exercise has a potential for humanizing the victim and the *other*, and third, it necessarily structures the Church in its mission of reconciliation in conflicted reality. The threefold implications correspond to the anthropological, sociopolitical, and theological dimensions of ethnic fragmentation I demonstrated in chapter one. In the next section, I would like to articulate the first two points in terms of fidelity to the original spirit of honesty to reality. This is because the proclivity of reigniting ethnic divisions that dehumanize persons of different ethnic groups in the sociopolitical and economic reality always lurks in Uganda's society. Therefore, a life-long commitment for all people and at all times is required for a process of reconciliation.

3.3.1 Remaining faithful to the Real: Becoming Truly Human

For Sobrino the essence of remaining faithful to the real is perseverance regardless of where

the process leads, especially when one encounters difficulties and challenges.[502] Fidelity to the real

is praxis-oriented, that is, it concerns practical ways by which the disciple encounters, responds,

and perseveres in her engagement with conflicted reality with a spirit of honesty. Sobrino states

that history must be "walked with humbly and not imagining that a first act of honesty, or the

original direction of our route will automatically carry us to our destination."[503] I suggest that it is

through this faithfulness to the original honesty of following Jesus that one hopes to actualize one's

becoming truly human, and the humanization of the *other*.

First, I argue that the exercise of mercy configures the subject into becoming truly human.

In my reading of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount in chapter two I showed that being a true

disciple of Jesus comprises being like the heavenly Father, that is, 'being perfect as the heavenly

Father is perfect' (cf Matt 5:48). Here I would like to articulate *being perfect* in terms of mercy.

Biblical scholar Hans Dieter Betz links the idea of 'being perfect as the heavenly Father' in

Matthew to Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful." For Betz, Luke

expresses this likeness to the heavenly Father in terms of mercy.[504] He asserts that in Luke's

Sermon on the Plain verse 6 echoes Matt 5:48 in the Sermon on the Mount. Betz argues that the

doctrine of emulating God in a Christian's way of life was well known and engrained in the religio-

historical circles where the Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon on the Mount originated.[505] For

him, the doctrine of 'being like God' was taught to show a distinguishing mark of what it means

to be a Christian.

Betz also shows that the teaching was widespread in the early Church since it is reflected

in several passages in the New Testament; for instance, in James 5:11, and in some letters of Paul

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[502] Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation*, 17.
[503] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 239.
[504] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 612.
[505] Ibid.

like Eph 4:32-5:1. Betz cites the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt 18:23-35) that echoes the same idea. He asserts that these examples portray that the disciple ought to be 'like God' in being merciful. In a similar line of thought biblical scholar Daniel J. Harrington argues that the last verse (Matt 18:35) of that passage indicates that the lesson to be drawn from the parable is for the disciple to reflect the nature of God's mercy and justice as the standard of being Christian. He states that "God is willing to show mercy to sinners, but they must be prepared to show mercy the other people."[506]

Betz further argues that the idea of 'being like the deity' in showing mercy was not new to Christians living in the first century. The importance of mercy was present in the Greco-Roman world as well. For instance, in Seneca's essay entitled *On Mercy* (*De Clementia*), the virtue of mercy is attributed to a good ruler. And that in the case of young Nero to whom it is addressed, the essay implores him to be merciful because, "in being merciful, the ruler imitates the gods."[507] However, Betz notes that in the Greco-Roman context the notion of mercy referred to divine power that could turned enemies into loyal friends. He similarly adds that being merciful was also applied to nature in her providence to all humanity. In this ancient sense, mercy was seen as a common denominator or constant that linked the divine, the human, and the cosmos. Hence, it appears that the exercise of mercy configures a human being to the kind of person the deity desires.

Furthermore, Betz explains that since Luke's and Matthew's sociohistorical contexts were different, the Sermon on the Plain presents in Hellenistic terms, what the Sermon on the Mount expresses in Jewish terms.[508] Nevertheless, in both of these verses the doctrine of 'being like God' is expressly stated. Betz concludes that Luke 6:36 seeks to motivate Christians to follow Jesus'

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[506] Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 271.
[507] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 613.
[508] Ibid.

love command by mirroring God's mercy as the ultimate inspiration for all Christian ethics.[509] In his words, "God loves … in his mercy, and such love constitutes proper behavior for the religiously sensitive Christian as well."[510] Betz's correlation of these two verses accords with the idea that the exercise of mercy inherently constitutes what it means to be an authentic human being in general and a Christian in particular. In other words, reflecting the nature of the Creator is the true vocation of the creature.

Sobrino portrays this idea in his reflection on the parable of the good Samaritan. He argues that Jesus uses the parable to show that the exercise of mercy is what it means to be truly human regardless of whether one is friend or foe.[511] Sobrino asserts that in the parable the one who reacts with mercy is a true human being. It is by the exercise of mercy that the human person is known to truly mirror God.[512] In a sense, reflecting God's mercy is the authentic human identity, character, and vocation.

In sum, it becomes evident that what constitutes a true human being is 'being like' Jesus the authentic human being who reflects the nature of the heavenly Father. In other words, fidelity to the real in the exercise of mercy has the potential helping persons toward becoming truly human as intended by God. In the next section, I articulate my second point that the exercise of mercy has a humanizing potential for the victim, oppressor, and the *other*. Again, I emphasize that in the process of social reconciliation these three categories of persons are crucial to Uganda's sociopolitical and economic context. Here, I argue that the humanizing potential of mercy requires an environment that engenders mutual and reciprocal relationships in which one's humanity is intrinsically bound up in the humanity of others.

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[509] Ibid., 614.
[510] Ibid., 614–15.
[511] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 17.
[512] Ibid., 132.

3.3.2 Mercy and its Humanizing Potential for Victims and the Other

In the previous section I argued that the exercise of mercy has a humanizing potential for the subject, precisely because it configures one's being onto the person of Jesus, just as Jesus reflects the identity of the heavenly Father. In this section, I argue that the exercise of mercy has a humanizing potential for victim, oppressor and 'ethnic other.' Here the exercise of mercy toward victim, oppressor, and the *other* attempts to reclaim their lost humanity, that is, restoring the dignity and wholeness that violence, oppression, and exclusion try to destroy.

First of all, Jesus' discourse on the Last Judgment (Matthew 25: 31-46) evinces that the rehumanization[513] of victims in historical reality by the exercise of mercy has eschatological import. Biblical scholar Ulrich Luz acknowledges that the central point in this discourse is twofold: First, the identification of 'lowliest brothers/sisters' that is, *all* persons in need with the world Judge: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt 25:40). This implies that contact with the least of one's sisters and brothers offers special access to the world Judge. Second, there is a preeminence of the acts of love, listed a total of four times by which one is judged.[514] What is striking about this list of deeds is that Jesus exclusively cites *reactions* with mercy toward the suffering or distress of others. For Luz, this underscores the importance of the exercise of mercy. Thus, in feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, providing shelter for the homeless, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick and those in prison (Matt 25:35-39, 42-44), one not only restores wholeness to the most deprived of Jesus's sisters and brothers but also encounters Christ himself in them. In this sense, as Sobrino asserts salvation itself is dependent on the exercise of mercy.

Moreover, in judging "all nations" there seem to be no distinction between Jew and Gentile,

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[513] Here rehumanization simply means reclaiming the human dignity that oppressive systems tend to destroy.
[514] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 271.

Christian and non-Christian. Biblical scholar Günther Bornkamm thinks that for Matthew the unbelieving world would be judged along with the disciples. He explains that in the final judgment there is no distinction between the two because both are judged by the same standard of love toward the lowliest.[515] This suggests that mercy is not an exclusive Christian attitude, response or virtue, rather, a universal principle that defines what it essentially means to be human. And that its exercise toward those deprived of human dignity constitutes their rehumanization. In this sense, restoring humanity is demanded of all human persons. That is, mercy is the first and last of all human responses to the suffering world. Therefore, the ethical standard of all human beings is simply being compassionate toward the vulnerable humanity.

Second, the gospels demonstrate that for Jesus the exercise of mercy surpasses barriers of oppression and exclusion whereby it offers a possibility of conversion for the oppressor. The Gospel according to Luke has a concentration of stories illustrating God's boundless mercy; for instance, the story of Zacchaeus (19:1-10); parable of Pharisee and tax collector (18:10-14)[516] among others. In all these examples Jesus shows how God's mercy crosses sociopolitical and economic boundaries. As noted above, Jesus' association with all people including 'sinners' was always met with disapproval by the religious authorities and pious people. For instance, the invitation to Zacchaeus' house was met with censure by the bystanders who grumbled that he "had gone to stay at the house of a sinner" (Luke 19:7). Biblical scholar E.P. Sanders notes that the association of Jesus with 'sinners' that later became fixed in the tradition about his ministry came as a charge against him.[517] The call to conversion for oppressors however, highlights a distinctive dimension of mercy expressed in terms of the demand to act with justice toward the marginalized

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[515] Günther Bornkamm, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 2 Enlarged Ed.. (London: SCM Press, 1982), 23.
[516] Witherup, *Mercy and the Bible: Why It Matters*, 69–73.
[517] Edward P. Sanders, "Jesus and the Sinners," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 6, no. 19 (September 1983): 6, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx.

(cf Matt 23:4).

Furthermore, as I mentioned above there was a category of the outsiders whom Jesus welcomed. Jesus's drawing near in mercy crossed barriers of difference and otherness. Both in the narrative of the Roman centurion (Luke 7:1-10) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-42) Jesus crosses political, cultural, and religious boundaries toward the marginalized *other*. The healing of the servant of the centurion (Matt 8:5-13) demonstrates Jesus' incorporation of Gentiles into the coming of God's Kingdom.[518] Ulrich Luz asserts that the centurion was a "marginal figure" in the mission of Jesus.[519] Luz again explains that the miracle of curing the servant happens in Gentile territory even though this section of Matthew's narrative exclusively speaks of miracles within Israel. For Luz, this suggests that this miracle was an interruption in the general flow of expected events in Jesus' mission to the children of Israel. This suggests Jesus' life and mission was open to all humanity.

From the above discussion it becomes evident that the humanizing efficacy of mercy requires building human interconnectedness beyond cultural, geographical, religious, and ideological barriers toward the other. Theologian Denise M. Ackerman expresses the same point that the ability to establish meaningful relationships in contexts of "difference and otherness"[520] constitutes "becoming fully human." Her argument is based on the idea that in [mutual and reciprocal] relationships the "other" is accorded the recognition and dignity of being a real human person. And that only in relation do human beings actualize their full and truly human potential. Ackermann understands the "other" as anyone considered outside the subject's space, boundaries,

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[518] Theodore W. Jennings and Tat-Siong Benny Liew, "Mistaken Identities but Model Faith: Rereading the Centurion, the Chap, and the Christ in Matthew 8:5-13," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 3 (2004): 467, accessed May 4, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3268043.

[519] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 9, 12.

[520] Denise M. Ackermann, "Becoming Fully Human: An Ethic of Relationship in Difference and Otherness," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 102, no. 3, EDS Occasional Papers (November 1998): 14.

time, and identity. This involves persons, cultures, tradition, ideologies, narratives, and beliefs that

the subject finds alien to her own circle of self-understanding, meaning, and relation.[521] As noted

in chapter one, Ackermann also states that to speak of the *other* is to signify a person who embodies

the constructed objectionable identity. In this sense, difference does not simply refer to what is

distinct, rather to the conscious awareness that *difference* denotes what is threatening, problematic,

and alienating. Thus, one who is 'different' is perceived as antagonistic and a threat.[522]

Nevertheless, Ackermann recognizes that overcoming barriers of difference and otherness

requires establishing mutual and reciprocal human relationships that foment links between

different persons into a web of relations that actualize each person's being and flourishing. In this

sense, people develop their very selves within a network of human relations in which characters

are formed and nurtured. She argues that human interconnectedness provides the richness, depth,

intricacy, and milieu in which life unfolds as truly human.[523]

In fact, this idea of human interconnectedness accords with the African concept of *ubuntu.*

Though this concept is difficult to render in Western languages, it touches on the very essence of

being human through the humanity of others. This is to say that one's humanity is inextricably

bound up in the humanity of others.[524] In other words, the actualization and flourishing of the

human subject is inseparably linked to the well-being of other human beings. Inversely, that which

dehumanizes one inevitably destroys the humanity of another. As the adage expresses it, "a person

is a person through other persons."[525] Desmond Tutu suggests that the concept of *ubuntu* literary

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[521] Ibid., 15.
[522] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland, eds., *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts*, Concilium (Glen Rock, N.J.) 1996 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 143.
[523] Ruthellen Josselson, *The Space Between Us: Exploring the Dimensions of Human Relationships*, 1st ed.., Jossey-Bass social and behavioral science series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 1.
[524] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31–32.
[525] Ibid., 31.

means that human beings belong to one "bundle of life."[526] He implies that the duty and task of each person involves the preservation of the humanity of another as the *summum bonum* of being truly human.[527]

In sum, the circle of life in which human persons fully develop as truly human includes the victim, oppressor, and the alienated *other*. This suggests that developing as a true human being requires ways of humanization of every human person. This also invariably rejects any form of divisions, hostility, and exclusion. Jesus' mission toward all persons regardless of gender, social, political, cultural or religious conditions expresses the essence of the humanizing potential of the exercise of mercy attained within an environment of human interconnectedness. In a sense, it is within mutual and reciprocal relations that mercy achieves to its full humanizing potential. In the next section, I demonstrate that the third disposition of Sobrino's spirituality offers an understanding of mercy as a virtue that orients persons, church, and society toward an eschatological vision.

3.3.3 Mercy as a Virtue: Allowing Ourselves to Be Carried by the "More"

The third disposition of Sobrino's spirituality of liberation is the willingness to be swept along by the "more" of reality. I interpret this disposition in four ways; it suggests a performative engagement with reality in order that its graced dimension becomes manifest. Second, a disciple ought to practice mercy as a moral virtue that perfects love. Third, the virtue of mercy has public moral implications. Fourth, the virtue of mercy requires perseverance.

For Sobrino historical reality though conflicted, is also a graced reality. It holds "an opportunity, not just a difficulty; it is "Good News, not merely demand."[528] He argues that just as

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[526] Ibid., 32.
[527] Ibid.
[528] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 240.

there is an original sin that constitutes a conflicted dimension of historical reality, there is also an original grace that comprises a gracious structure of reality.[529] The 'graced structure' of reality according to Sobrino, "is more original [than structural sin], though the fruits of the latter appear to be quantitatively greater than those of the former."[530] Historical reality is imbued with accumulated goodness. By remaining honest and faithful we allow ourselves to be permeated with the grace that historical reality provides. In this way we are "borne up on the 'more" of reality so that hope is nourished and love facilitated.[531]

To begin with, I understand Sobrino to mean that for the fruits of graced reality to become manifest, human agency is required. This suggests an active and performative engagement with reality so that the disciple is born along with it to what reality promises, rather than taking a passive stance toward it. And that the more we labor along the path of faithfulness and honesty, the more historical reality carries us.[532] In this sense, graced reality offers us the direction and strength to traverse the difficulties we might encounter along the way toward what it aspires, promises, and ought to be. An active, honest, and faithful engagement with historical reality should offer an experience of God who makes Godself manifest within historical reality. As earlier mentioned, the life and mission of Jesus of Nazareth demonstrates that God is not a remote deity accessible through some form of esoteric formulas. God is among us – *Immanuel.* To accept the grace emerging from reality (in all its forms; political, social, economic, and religious) by the practice of mercy, allows us to be carried to the 'more' reality promises, that is, to 'a future utopia.[533]

Second, a disciple ought to practice mercy as a virtue. The practice of mercy becomes the

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[529] Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ellacuría Ignacio (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 240.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 240.
[532] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 240.
[533] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 240.

habitual quality of one's life. It offers the potential of transformation. In this sense, it creates opportunities for the disciple to become *who,* she ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do to transform social structures. In a sense, acting with mercy is not just a nice thing to do for one who suffers, but rather it is the very basis of one's salvation.[534] Mercy is a virtue that perfects love. As noted above, mercy as a specific form of love, has social implications. It is a public moral virtue as I argue below.

Third, Christian faith confession in public life requires a reaction with mercy toward the suffering other. Theologian James Keenan puts this clearly in his definition of mercy as "the willingness to enter the chaos of another."[535] Mercy is outwardly directed, it is the readiness to take on the burdens, troubles, and suffering of another person. Keenan anchors his understanding of mercy on scriptural and theological foundations. In his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) he notes that the proper answer to the question, "who is the neighbor to the suffering other," is the merciful response of the Samaritan who enters the chaos of the victim.[536] Following Keenan's reading of the parable, Christian ethicist Nichole Flores affirms that "we are called to follow the actions of the Good Samaritan…because it is a retelling of the entire Gospel."[537] In other words, the reaction of the Good Samaritan summarizes Christian response to suffering. She further suggests that "mercy is a public virtue, one which ought to be pursued in accord with national strivings for justice."[538] It implies that the virtue of mercy ought to inspire both ecclesial mission and the content and execution of justice in matters of public policy in attending to the needs of the most vulnerable.

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[534] Nichole Flores, "Mercy as a Public Virtue," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 48, no. 3 (2020): 463, accessed May 13, 2022, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jore.12327.
[535] James F. Keenan, S.J., *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, Third. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 5.
[536] Ibid., 4.
[537] Flores, "Mercy as a Public Virtue," 462.
[538] Ibid., 460.

Lastly, Sobrino asserts that a response with mercy is not a one-time thing; it requires perseverance.[539] One must carry through with the original honesty and be born to the more of reality. In chapter four and five I will propose the *event of encounter* as a pastoral praxis that enables persons and communities to exercise an incarnational mission of mercy toward ongoing transformation. Moreover, the coming of the Kingdom requires constant radical *metanoia,* that helps to transform the subject, offer hope to poor, demand the conversion of the oppressors, and offer all persons the opportunity to live a life worthy of the Kingdom. While the Kingdom is pure gift, out of God's gratuitous love, it nevertheless demands human striving.[540] The twofold aspects of the coming of the Kingdom must be kept in creative tension, namely, it is God's gift and a task.

3.4. CONCLUSION

I have explored Sobrino's understanding of spirituality of liberation and adapted it to Uganda's context to establish a spirituality of reconciliation. For Sobrino, engaging a Christian spirituality of liberation has three main dispositions; honesty to the real, fidelity to the real, and allowing ourselves to be led by the 'more' of the real. Practically, honesty to the real elicits a reaction of mercy that takes different forms according to the nature of the wounds (for instance, justice, healing, advocacy, truth, economic development, reparations, etc.…). I have demonstrated that the principle of mercy derives from the primordial attribute of God and as such, the essential feature of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. For a disciple who takes her likeness to Jesus – the authentic human, mercy is the fundamental principle that defines what it means to be human and Christian. Mercy as an ecclesial and public virtue also necessarily structures the mission of the Church. The following of Jesus in Uganda historical reality means exercising mercy as the fundamental way of mediating God's reign in that reality, thus actualizing the eschatological

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[539] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 239.
[540] Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical -Theological View* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 76.

dimension of reality.

   As alluded to above, drawing near to the conditions of victims, oppressors, and the ethnic other suggests an incarnational vision in historical reality. Next chapter proposes Sobrino's incarnational vision as a hermeneutical and praxis-based model for social reconciliation. I will argue that the Incarnation (God's drawing near to and transformation of conflicted reality) is normative for a Christian approach to the process of social reconciliation.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN INCARNATIONAL MISSION OF MERCY: A HERMENEUTICAL AND PRAXIS-BASED MODEL FOR A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL RECONCILIATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The central question of this project is threefold; *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do to establish social relations and transform social structures. In the previous chapter I demonstrated that a *spirituality* grounded on mercy, and the exercise of the same offers a specific orientation to persons and communities to respond to this threefold question as it pertains to Uganda's conflicted reality. A spirituality and exercise of mercy seeks to transform subjects, the condition of victims, oppressors, and the unjust social structures. I showed that like Sobrino, I understand mercy, as a specific "praxic love that swells within a person" in the face of another's suffering, "driving its subject to eradicate that suffering for no other reason than that it [the suffering] exists.[541] The subject interiorizes the suffering of another, and thus inescapably responds in the face of that suffering in order to eradicate it. I interpret Sobrino's understanding of mercy to further mean the willingness of the subject to engage the reality of another in order to transform that reality for the better. Applied to Uganda's context, the notion of mercy thus becomes an all-inclusive principle not only limited to victims, but also involves the transformation of conflicted reality that encompasses the oppressor and ethnic other. In effect, this chapter proposes an incarnational mission of mission of mercy that seeks to draw near to the condition of victims, challenge oppressors, and engage the ethnic other. Precisely, an incarnational mercy assumes the willingness of the subject to draw near the reality of another in such a way that that engagement engenders transformation of the subject, the victim, oppressor,

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[541] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 18.

and ethnic other. In Uganda's sociopolitical and historical context these three realities (victim, oppressor, and ethnic other) are intertwined.

As chapter one demonstrated, understanding the reality of victim, oppressor, and ethnic other in Uganda's political history is deeply complex and ambivalent. It is tied to the fact that the elite of ethnic groups in power at a particular time promote cycles of alienation, exclusion, repression, and retaliatory oppression. As a consequence, the phenomenon of victims in one regime turning into oppressors in another is quite common. In like manner, perpetrators in one regime may turn into victims in the next. Moreover, the reality of oppressors has far reaching connotations. By common social perception, oppression often implicates members of the ethnic group whose elite are in power, simply because they are perceived as beneficiaries of an oppressive system. This phenomenon however, does not eschew the stark reality of culpability of oppressors during specific regimes or exonerate those responsible for heinous crimes. It simply highlights the fact that the overall perception of the victim-oppressor reality and ethnic other in Uganda's sociopolitical and historical framework has overlapping connotations. Quite frequently, some victims collaborate with oppressive regimes to further victimize their fellow victims. The oppressive system consists of multilayers of networks from the elite oppressors to grassroots including spies, collaborators, informers, middlemen, among others at all levels of society. Although the majority of people remain victims to this system, to some extent this dynamic blurs a clear-cut dichotomy that sets oppressors on one side and victims on the other. Like in other contexts, the closer one tries to understand the country's conflicted reality, the more one realizes that social reconciliation in Uganda requires a delicate approach. Hence, drawing near to the victim in some sense incorporates the 'perpetrators' as well as the ethnic other, as I elaborate below.

The sociopolitical and economic divisions are framed within ethnic relations. Perpetrators are circumscribed within ethnic collectives, to such a degree that their identity and actions are

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frequently merged with their ethnicity which they share with other co-ethnics. For instance, the heinous acts of Idi Amin and Milton Obote are perceived both as pertaining to their person, and as representatives of their own groups. In perceiving individual persons as part of ethnic collectivities, oppressors are often deemed patrons for the survival and flourishing of their own group. Hence, perpetrators are often perceived as part of a larger network of relations within their own ethnic groups that benefit from their oppressive actions. This means that the drawing near to perpetrators necessarily requires the transformation of the conflicted ethnic identities and relations. Therefore, this chapter argues for an all-inclusive incarnational mission of mercy that not only seeks to eradicate the suffering of victims but also engage the oppressors and the ethnic other. While reconciliation begins with eradicating the effects of the oppressor on the victims, the ethnic other is part of the wider socioethnic conflicted reality within which victim-oppressor reality is formulated, framed, and interpreted.

As a general thesis of this project I propose an incarnational mission of mercy as a hermeneutical and praxis-based approach toward a Christian model of social reconciliation. As I will further elaborate, by incarnational mission I mean, 'drawing near to the victim, oppressor, and ethnic other, thus establishing a fundamental experience of closeness, welcome, and participation[542] in the life of the other in order to transform it. An incarnational mission of mercy I propose accords with the Christian tradition that stresses an incarnational faith that affirms the faith experience of God within historical existence. Incarnational faith derives from the event of the Incarnation by which the divine reality is manifested within historical reality. In effect an incarnational mercy has a potential of orienting *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do to establish social relations and transform

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[542] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 229.

social structures. I therefore define social reconciliation as *a historical process by which persons, communities, institutions, and the Church actively and practically draw near to the other to engage in processes and events that help interpret and transform their reality. Reconciliation implies drawing near victims to foster justice, solidarity, and hope; engage perpetrators to engender forgiveness and conversion, and establish mutual trust and cooperation with the ethnic other in order to anticipate even if imperfectly, the reconciling values of the Kingdom of God*. An incarnational mission of mercy aims at eradicating oppression, alienation, exclusion, and otherness in order to establish cooperation, mutual trust, and mutual acceptance. As noted above, this understanding of mercy is all-inclusive, it extends beyond the victim who is the primary recipient of mercy, to include the oppressor and the ethnic other into the process of social reconciliation.

The incarnational mission of mercy aims at providing persons, institutions, and communities new attitudes, ways of relating, and acting toward another. It seeks to build a renewed social fabric grounded on solidarity, justice, forgiveness, conversion, mutual trust, and cooperation. I am aware that according to Christian tradition reconciliation will only be fully achieved eschatologically through God's grace. Nevertheless, this project realizes the significance of the temporary task to make present, though imperfectly that eschatological reality take root in history. The incarnational mission attempts to express that transcendental reality within the temporal, the work of grace through human action, and spirituality through the praxis of the mercy.

In order to parse out the main thesis of the project section one defines what I mean by the incarnational mission of mercy. I argue that the incarnational mission of mercy is a fundamental aspect of making present the Kingdom of God in conflicted history. Again, Christian tradition itself stresses an incarnational faith in which the faith experience of God is affirmed by the Incarnation in historical existence. God became one like us in all things but sin, so that that experience of God can transform the human reality. I advance the view that the incarnational

mission of mercy provides a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion for a Christian approach to social reconciliation in Uganda. In what follows, I further breakdown the main thesis into three sub-theses that constitute the three remaining sections.

In section two I argue that an incarnational mission begins with the suffering of victims and that its central focus is fostering justice through solidarity. As illustrated above justice is understood in terms right relations among all people, groups, and institutions. An essential aspect of promoting justice is establishing solidarity with victims. Establishing communities of solidarity is essential to reconstructing the victim's identity, security and restoring her dignity as a human person. As a result, solidarity intends to empower victims to become agents of their own liberation. Solidarity not only requires the involvement of victims themselves, but also needs institutions and non-victims develop an enduring praxis that can be sustained for generations. With solidarity there is a potential for victims and non-victims become companions in the work of social reconciliation. Consequently, I argue that the drawing near to the world of victims offers a salvific value for non-victims as well. Like Sobrino, I advance the view that the condition of victims offers salvific opportunities for all involves in the task of liberation and reconciliation.[543] This mutual engagement opens a communicative space between the victims and non-victims. Such space has a potential of providing transformation and humanizing values for all. As Sobrino states this encounter from the underside of history provides "an experience of grace, that arises from where we least expect it."[544] The engagement providing opportunity of challenging complacency of non-victims toward acts of justice, thus eradicating social sin. In this sense, drawing close to another fosters a mutual experience that seeks to create a more humane world insofar as that experience removes injustice and oppositions between victim, oppressor, and ethnic other. In this sense, an

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[543] Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor*, 49.
[544] Ibid., 52.

incarnational mission of mercy has the potential of transforming Uganda's society from deeply intrenched ethnic divisions, and generate a vision of hope for social reconciliation.

In the third section I focus on the world of oppressors and oppressive systems. Here I argue that institutional solidarity (particularly in civil society) on behalf of victims offers ways of engaging oppressors. Engaging oppressors presents a set of a challenges but also opportunities of justice, forgiveness, and conversion. As mentioned above, given the multilayered dynamic of oppressor-victim I propose restorative processes of reintegrating former oppressors and their collaborators into society. Ways of integrating offenders is crucial, because oppressors are constituted within a larger network of ethnic relations.

The fourth section argues that an incarnational mission of mercy should involve the ethnic other. It should aim at mending ethnic relations that undergird the victim-oppressor dynamic in Uganda's sociopolitical and economic reality. Processes and events that seek to establish positive ethnic relations are essential. For instance, justice should include economic empowerment, equal opportunity in the different geographic regions of the country particularly between north and south. Justice (as right relation) should consist of establishing lasting mutual trust through cooperation among ethnic groups as a critical component to the country's intergenerational reconciliation. Hence, drawing near the ethnic other aims at reaching beyond geographical boundaries, cultural expressions, meaning, and language. Consequently, the incarnational mission of mercy aims at eradicating sociopolitical and economic divisions in order to foster the integration of Uganda's society without homogenization. It seeks to preserve diversity of ethnicity, cultures, and languages without *othering* based on these differences. In the next section, I articulate what I mean by the incarnational mission.

SECTION I: UNDERSTANDING OF AN INCARNATIONAL MISSION OF MERCY

4.1 An Incarnational Mission in the Exercise of Mercy

My proposal of an incarnational mission of mercy derives from Sobrino's twofold understanding of God's *kenosis,* and his attempt to close the gap between Christian faith and practice. First of all, Sobrino's understanding of the Incarnation presupposes a 'double' kenosis, that is, God's self-emptying or "lessening." [545] The first lessening consists in the fact that God became human. As the letter to the Philippians states, "who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God… he emptied himself …coming in human likeness (cf Phil 2:6-11). The second lessening consists in the fact that God not only became human, but a *weak* human being. In this second sense God became weak with those who are weak and lived in solidarity with them. For Sobrino, this [second] form of *kenosis* cannot be considered accidental to the structure of Jesus' life and mission. Rather, it is constitutive of the way Jesus wished to be understood with regard to his person, mission, and relation to his Heavenly Father. As the Gospel according to Luke 4:18 expresses this idea in the statement; "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives…and let the oppressed free." The setting of this proclamation (among the poor) is as essential as the message itself. It implies that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth God became *Immanuel* in this particular way, primarily for the sake of the weak. This drawing near and dwelling among the vulnerable has liberative and salvific significance for the victims of history. As a corollary, it has implications for Jesus' followers in four ways: To begin with, it requires a disciple of Jesus to draw near the victims of history. Here I understanding that being a disciple of Jesus is all inclusive, victims and non-victims are all called to response to the demand of drawing near to the victims.

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[545] Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor*, 150.

Furthermore, drawing close presents the disciple with opportunities of conversion and transformation. Lastly it exposes the subject to face the forces of oppression head on. Drawing near has potential of opening the disciple to vulnerability as the oppressive conditions might dictate. As mentioned above, Jesus' direct confrontation with the religious and political establishments that laid heavy burdens on the vulnerable sets the tone for a similar experience in a conflicted historical reality. Therefore, drawing near to the excluded and impoverished not only has significance for the victims but also for the one who attends to engage that reality. Nevertheless, the engagement with forces of oppression offers an invitation to oppressors for the possibility of conversion.

Second, faith in Jesus finds its expression in Christian practice. An incarnational mission of mercy has the potential of orienting Christian life in ways that resemble God's double kenosis. In other words, drawing near to the vulnerable carries a practical import for the subject's faith in Jesus and her spirituality. This implies that a Christian ought to draw near to those persons and/or conditions in which Jesus first proclaimed the Kingdom of God. If God's preferred dwelling was among the poor and for the poor, Christian faith and living requires drawing near the conditions and places that approximate God's preference. This implies that following Jesus requires the Christians to resist the tendency to separate abstract faith and hope from concrete lived experience. An incarnational approach I propose resists abstract affirmations of mercy, justice, forgiveness, and conversion without a corresponding praxis that concretizes them. Sobrino warns about the strict dichotomy between the spiritual and material in what he calls "christological reduction of the gospel" that focuses on encountering Christ exclusively in "the line of faith and personal contact with Christ" but neglects the realization of God's kingdom concretely within historical

reality.[546] For Sobrino, if Christian life is reduced to abstract faith and hope, Christian practice would certainly be considered secondary to the fundamental response of faith in Christ and contact with him. [547] In this sense, Christian living would lead to a one-sided relation with Christ and a devaluation of the historical dimension of the kingdom of God. This one-sided approach would consequently invalidate the incarnational structure of Jesus' historical life itself, and its normativity for Christian living. Sobrino states that "the structure of Jesus' life is a structure of incarnation, of becoming real flesh in real history."[548] This implies that the incarnation (drawing near to the other) provides the interpretation, meaning, and practice of the way a Christian should live in history. Hence, just as by his Incarnation God made his [*sic*] dwelling among us, so must the believer practice her faith by a similar incarnational modality. In this sense, the Incarnation becomes an ongoing reality, rather than a one-time event.

Furthermore, the implications of God's drawing near to us reach beyond mere acceptance of a truth and hope of the coming of the kingdom of God. The incarnational structure of Christian faith should constitute the historicization of kingdom of God as an objective content of the disciple's life in an historical reality that constantly seeks to reject God's reign. Hence, living a Christian life means living an incarnational mercy (willingness to draw near to the other's reality). Just as the whole of Jesus' incarnational life toward the least of God's children was pleasing to God, similarly, those who live in accordance with the life of Jesus become pleasing to God, and therefore accepted by God.[549]

In sum, an incarnational mission of mercy understands the Incarnation as the willingness to draw near to the reality of the *other* in order to transform it. This precisely is what mercy means

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[546] Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor*, 42-43.
[547] Ibid., 45.
[548] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 15.
[549] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 228.

– the willingness to draw near and enter into the reality of the other. In this sense, an incarnational mission becomes an enduring modality of Christian life and mission in ways that are liberative and salvific. It provides the way a Christian ought to interpret reality and draw close to those God has chosen as the primary recipients of the liberative message of the Kingdom. It also offers ways of merging faith and practice in order to make present the historical dimension of the Kingdom of God. In so doing, the Spirit of Jesus helps the disciple to mediate the values of the Kingdom of God; faith, hope, and love. Though the Christian understanding of God's Kingdom is eschatological, conformity with it in historical reality is crucial for the anticipation of its fulfillment. For this project, conformity to the coming of the kingdom here and now, and entering it requires drawing near to the other. The next section argues that an incarnational mission of mercy is an essential aspect of the historical dimension of Kingdom of God.

4.1.2 Incarnational Mission of Mercy as a Fundamental Element of the Historical Reality of the Kingdom of God

In this section I argue, first that the incarnational mission of mercy is constitutive of the nature of the historical dimension of kingdom of God. It has the potential of anticipating even though in an imperfect and provisional manner God's eschatological Kingdom. This argument is based on the way God has revealed Godself in history. That is, God has come to be known as a God of history, particularly by drawing near to the weakest. Second, an incarnational mission of mercy gives a specific orientation to love (chapter two) particularly as demanded by those conditions where historical reality is most vulnerable and conflicted. Third, an incarnational mission offers opportunity for all peoples to embrace the virtues of the Kingdom precisely in those settings/conditions where God has place special attention. In a sense, an incarnational mercy offers an opportunity for communion with God and with one another. In what follows below, I elaborate on the three arguments briefly stated above.

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First, Sobrino writes that "God never appears as God-in-himself but as a God for history, and therefore, as a God-of-a-people."[550] As mentioned above, in the Exodus event God hears the cry of the people, remembers the covenant with Abraham, and draws near to rescue them by mighty deeds. Following the tradition of the Old Testament Jesus' mission falls in line with a God who gives Godself to history in order that that history be transformed according to God's design. For Sobrino, "this dual unity" [divinity and creation] which anticipates a final consummation of all reality expresses the twofold nature of the kingdom of God that Jesus preached.[551] Sobrino asserts that for Jesus the reality of the Kingdom has both a transcendent and historical dimension in such a way that the latter depends on the former.[552] This implies that the relationship of God to history is essential to the mediation of the transcendent reality insofar as it is expressed in terms of an incarnational structure of life. The reality of God's kingdom consists of divine initiative and the historical response to it.

To begin with, God's Kingdom is made present by divine initiative, precisely because God freely chooses to draw near to history and to liberate victims of history. In this sense, the kingship of God has the capacity to intervene in history to transform a bad or unjust situation into a good and just one.[553] Sobrino suggests that the phrase "reign of God" is more appropriate to capture God's positive action by which God transforms historical reality. In addition, God engages the human condition by entering into communion with human persons. God's closeness does not impose itself intrinsically upon historical reality. Rather, to use the language of Ellacuría, in the Incarnation God "realizes the weight of reality" and thus becomes fully embedded in midst of the human condition, that is, God takes on humanity in the flesh.[554]

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[550] Ibid., 69.
[551] Ibid.
[552] Ibid., 68.
[553] Ibid., 71.
[554] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 123.

Moreover, as Sobrino writes in 'becoming flesh' God has lowered Godself in a twofold manner: God has come down to the human level, and at that level, God came to what is humanly weak. Sobrino further states that in God's becoming flesh, "*transcendence* has become *trans-descendence, …* benevolent closeness has become *co-descendence …* and affectionate embrace."[555] In this sense, divine proximity to humanity is more than a modality of the divine manifestation: It is the very content of the reality of God's saving activity. In a manner of speaking, it is not accidental for divine reality to be involved in history, rather, it is part of the divine reality to approach the human being in that manner. [556] God's drawing near to and taking part in human history is constitutive of the nature of the historical dimension of the kingdom of God. Additionally, this drawing near is both salvific and aims at reconciling conflicted reality. In other words, where God truly reigns, such a society, history, and people are united and transformed to reflect the eschatological Kingdom of God.

Second, an incarnational structure of mercy offers a specific orientation to love. Jesus' person, life, and mission typify incarnational mercy as a specific form of love that embodies God's drawing near to wounded humanity. Mercy was a concrete expression of the demands of the decisive and all-embracing realities; the coming of God's Kingdom and obedience to the Father toward which his entire life was directed.[557] The Father was the personal reality that gave meaning and direction to Jesus' life[558] in his mission toward the marginalized. Jesus' mission toward the poor gave a particular orientation to his message. As Sobrino states, the facts about Jesus' life, that is, that he was born in the unimportant town of Nazareth, "which lay in the hills of the marginal

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[555] Jon Sobrino, "No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays," *Religious Studies Review* 34, no. 4 (2008): 55.

[556] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 113.

[557] Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor*, 43.

[558] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 67.

province of Galilee and as a person of the poor, surrounded by the poor, and serving the poor,"[559] are not random or inconsequential. Jesus' life and mission developed in particular places, circumstances, and for a specific primary audience. This implies that the "historical setting" where Jesus exercised mercy is important. The incarnational structural of his life depicts God's preferential option for those who are small and weak. And as such, this structure provides a praxis-based imperative for the way of following Jesus and being human in the world. In this sense, the nature of Jesus' preferred audience reveals reliable insights into who God is and what matters to God. In like manner, what matters to God should matter to human beings as a whole. While the Incarnation illuminates, in a sacramental fashion, the active presence of the transcendent in human history, the choice of Jesus' audience, historical circumstances, and active involvement with particular persons becomes crucial for living a human and Christian life.

Third, an incarnational mission of mercy provides a setting for reconciliation in conflicted reality. This means an incarnational mission offers opportunity for all people to draw near to the God of the Kingdom and the kingdom of God mysteriously present in those conditions and persons on earth (cf GS 39). For this project, encounter with God can be made possible by drawing near to the condition of victims. Precisely because (as noted above) there is a correlation between the historical setting, the audience, and the historical dimension of the God of the Kingdom. God has come to be known as a God of history particularly a God of the poor of history. Since God identifies with the vulnerable, it follows that the historical setting and Jesus' primary audience are constitutive of the way God can be encountered in historical reality. An incarnational mission of mercy offers an intrinsic relation between disciple, victim, and God. While at the same time it provides a mediation for the reconciling presence of God and conflicted historical reality. This

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[559] Sobrino, "Spirituality and the Following of Jesus," 688.

means that an incarnational mission of mercy provides a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion for social reconciliation as the next section clarifies.

4.1.2 Incarnational Mission as the Hermeneutical and Praxis-Based Model for Social Reconciliation

This section presents the main thesis of the project. I argue that an incarnational mission of mercy is a hermeneutical and praxis-based criterion for social reconciliation in Uganda's process of social reconciliation. My argument is founded on the modality of God's self-revelation and relation to history, Jesus' incarnational life and mission, the historical dimension of God's kingdom as well as the demands of living an incarnational Christian faith. As noted above, God has revealed Godself as a God of history by drawing close to humanity. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth God became *Immanuel*. Living a Christian faith too requires merging spirituality and practice. An incarnational mercy I advance offers ways of interpreting and engaging conflicted reality; it creates a potential of knowing conflicted reality and establishing right relations between the subject, victim, oppressor, and ethnic other. Drawing near to the other affords the subject access to that reality, so that the subject can be honest with that reality noetically, ethically, and transformatively. Said differently, an incarnational mission of mercy stands against parochial enclaves in which people often circumscribe themselves, in order to embrace the reconciling totality of historical existence that the kingdom of God demands. If the Kingdom of God and the God of the Kingdom are mediated by drawing near to human persons in ways that are really historical, with real import to what it means to be human, and establishing the type of relationships with others that are necessary to be truly human,[560] then an incarnational mission of mercy establishes a standard for the mediation of the experience of God for reconciliation in a conflicted historical reality. This experience consists of establishing right relations among all persons and

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[560] Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor*, 150.

creating positive social arrangements. Since incarnational mercy constitutes God's revelation in history as a good forgiving, merciful, life-giving, liberating, and redeeming God by drawing near to the weak, then the historical practice of incarnational mission of mercy offers an essential model for engaging conflicted human society. This why this project defines social reconciliation as a process by which persons, communities, institutions, and the Church actively and practically draw near the *other* to engage in processes and events that help interpret the *other's* reality in ways that foster justice, solidarity, and hope for victims; engender conversion and forgiveness of perpetrators, and establish mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation with the ethnic other.

To begin with, the incarnational mission of mercy I propose seeks to establish actual encounters with human persons in their particular settings. These encounters seek to understand the reality of the other whether victim, oppressor, or ethnic other. As noted above these three realities have interlacing implications in Uganda's conflicted political history. Persons and groups hold memories and histories of persons of other groups in such a way that their identities and relations are shaped either by conflicts or intimacies.[561] In this sense, drawing near to the reality of the other carries with it the weight of accumulated histories and memories both positive and negative. The reality of the victim is a stark reminder of the negative history and memory of oppression.

In practice, drawing near the victims first and foremost requires attending to the effects of oppression. In addition, engaging the oppressor may allow him recognize his sin, embrace conversion, and encourage him accept the gift of forgiveness. Encountering the other in ways that are reconciling provides a liberative and salvific potential because in these encounters, to use

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[561] Geraldine Smyth OP, "Respecting Boundaries and Bonds: Journeys of Identity and Beyond," in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 142.

Sobrino's words, "God approaches in order to save, and approaches *as* savior: God draws near for love, and as love."[562] God draws near humans as "a God who forgives their sin, heals their heart, humanizes them, and fulfills them." As mentioned above, achieving reconciliation is not an unaided human endeavor. Reconciliation is God's work of grace in which all humans are called to participate. Moreover, the ethnically conflicted reality in which oppressive regimes have framed divisive and repressive mechanisms in Uganda requires concerted efforts for all citizens.

Chapter one showed that in Uganda's conflicted sociopolitical reality ethnic diversity in language, culture, and geographical location has oftentimes been manipulated to act as barrier to ethnic interactions. The diversity has come to define ethnic relationships negatively. Building relations with the ethnic other is crucial to the social reconstruction of Uganda's society. This means that persons, institutions, organizations ought to make the effort to reach beyond geographic, cultural, and language barriers to encounter the other. This project focuses particularly on the spirituality and praxis of the Church as the harbinger of social reconciliation. The Church should lead the mission to engage in processes and events that create unity and harmony among peoples of the different ethnic groups.

In sum, direct engagement with the other offers a possibility for a reformed interpretation of their historical reality, identifying the action that requires to transform that reality from one of injustice and division, to something resembling a just and unified society. Ideally, "acting" should be concrete and specific, leading toward more tangible, lasting systemic change,[563] thus, transforming the status quo. While chapter five will articulate specific processes and events that

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[562] Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 113.
[563] Christopher P. Vogt, "Mercy, Solidarity, and Hope: Essential Personal and Political Virtues in Troubled Times," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 14, no. 2 (August 2, 2017): 209, accessed October 18, 2021, https://www-pdcnet-org.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/pdc/bvdb.nsf/purchase?openform&fp=jcathsoc&id=jcathsoc_2017_0014_0002_0205_0228.

seek to engender an incarnational mission of mercy through encounter, the following section illustrates why the incarnation mission of mercy should begin with solidarity with victims.

SECTION II: AN INCARNATION MISSION AND THE VICTIM

4.2. Incarnational Mission: Drawing Near to Victims

The central argument of this section is that the incarnational mission of mercy aims at fostering solidarity with victims. By *solidarity* I mean a unity in compassion and justice that aims at overcoming anthropological, sociopolitical, religious, cultural, economic, and ethnic divisions.[564] In this sense solidarity challenges any tendency to form exclusive relational identities. It aims at opening wider circles of inclusive relations. Solidarity is a concrete way of expressing an incarnational mercy that seeks to willingly identify with the suffering of another and to eradicate the structures of injustice.[565] In this project however, solidarity takes on a particularly Christian dimension. It derives from the incarnational life of God in the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth.

An incarnational structure of Jesus' life shows that compassionate engagement with victims is the only response to a suffering and conflicted world. This is shown by Jesus' kenotic movement by which he exemplifies God's loving solidarity with humanity beginning with the weakest. In like manner, God invites all humans to take a similar turn toward the suffering other. Thus, if conflicted reality is to be liberated and reconciled, it must to start with the most vulnerable particularly by eradicating the causes of suffering. This is because the conditions of suffering are where the consequences of social sin are most clearly exhibited. And it is within the condition of the victim that God reveals Godself to be the Merciful One. Solidarity with victims is therefore a

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[564] Here, I adapted Spohn's definition of Solidarity to suit Uganda's context. *See,* William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 180.
[565] Ibid., 181.

fundamental proposition of Christian living.[566]

Furthermore, in light of faith, a Christian dimension of solidarity expresses gratuity for the gift of God's grace for all. God's gift engenders forgiveness and reconciliation with the other. In this sense, the other is a neighbor, a companion, and sharer in God's gift of grace equal with ourselves as children of God. Solidarity recognizes the other as person, thus as collaborator in the work of reconciliation. The other is a living image of God the Father, redeemed by Jesus Christ and living "under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit."[567] Hence, in a historical context permeated by conflict and injustice, an honest apprehension of reality elicits drawing near in solidarity with the victims against the forces that oppress them.[568] Solidarity with victims has a potential of fostering their agency in overcoming oppression. Before I proceed further, in the next section I need to illustrate the multilayered sociopolitical and historical context that undergirds victim-oppressor dynamic in Uganda's context.

4.2.1 An Understanding of Victimhood in Uganda's Sociopolitical Context

On account of Uganda's unique sociopolitical history, a brief explanation is necessary to understand the contemporary situation. As a consequence of decades of ethnically based mutual exclusion and violence, it is not easy to neatly divide the society between the guilty perpetrators on one side and innocent victims on the other. This however, is not meant to undermine the stark reality of victims and oppressors in a particular regime, rather to underline the fact that when one examines the overarching history of the country, one discovers that the retaliatory repression of previous regimes leaves behind a negative legacy of mutual hate and exclusion. Moreover, in each new regime ethnic elite regularly give economic, political, and social advantage to members of

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[566] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 243n31. Quoted from Sobrino, *Where is God? Earthquake, Terrorism, Barbarity, and Hope*, trans. Margaret Wilde (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2004), 134
[567] Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*, 181.
[568] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 164.

their own ethnic group over and against the rest. Borrowing Miroslav Volf's words one may say that the closer one examines Uganda's historical reality "the more we see an intractable maze of hatreds, dishonesties, manipulations, and brutalities, each reinforcing the other"[569] over decades. Precisely, a history of cycles of divisions, exclusion, and retaliatory oppression has its legacy in each new regime. In such a context, as Volf further writes, "intertwined through the wrongdoing committed and suffered, the victim and violator are bound in the tragic and self-perpetuating solidarity of sin." The "tendency of the victim to turn into a perpetrator"[570] has remained a permanent reality in Uganda's political history. While change of power merely swaps ethnic elite and their collaborators, the majority of people remain victims either trapped into systems of patronage to serve the existing elite or permanently remain at the bottom of society. The country needs a new ethos to contravene this snowball effect of the tit-for-tat cycles of exclusion and alienation. If the narrative of the country continues to be written around the schema of "oppressed" versus "oppressors" those in power find excuses for claiming the higher moral ground of victim.[571] As a result, new regimes have become equally oppressive, trying to cling to power by all means. The country's history has always been an endless struggle of one group in power against all others. This implies that if one tries to emphasize categories of oppressor-victim, they provide the combat gear for further cycles of retaliation and oppression.

It becomes clear that the understanding of victim and oppressor does not fit one simple category. There are multilayers and intertwined histories of mutual exclusion. When one tries to stress the polarities of victim-oppression, one would imprison different groups within a narrative of their own victimization with its accompanying desire for retaliation. Additionally, the system

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[569] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 81.
[570] Ibid., 93.
[571] Ibid., 103.

of patronage has networks of collaborators and beneficiaries to the lowest level of society consisting of cascading levels of complicity in the oppressive systems. The complexity of this reality makes it difficult to have overarching schema along which to align all social arrangements in the country. Without breaking the cycles of mutual exclusion and alienation, the country remains trapped in a vortex of mutually reinforcing victimization.[572] What the people of Uganda need is to invent processes and events that help disentangle themselves from discourses, narratives, and practices that reinforce a form of 'rage of the innocent' in every new regime. Uganda requires a new orientations and social practices that break these cycles in ways that foster right relations among persons and groups. In the next section I return to my previous argument that articulates why an incarnational mission of mercy ought to first establish solidarity with victims.

4.2.2 Solidarity with Victims: An Aspect of an Incarnational mission of Mercy

An incarnational mission of mercy seeks to create solidarity in order to foster sisterhood and brotherhood with victims as inspired by the Second Vatican Council's document on the *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in Modern World*. Vatican II affirms that the Church should not flee from the world, rather imitate Christ who "entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served" (*GS #3*). Solidarity that combines compassion and justice requires multiple levels of engagement: persons, communities, institutions, and society.

First, at a person-to-person level solidarity is a relational feature that defines how people are called to live with one another in community. Christian ethicist Gerald Beyer argues that the first step in embodying solidarity is for persons to recognize the important truth that being human in society includes the reality of human interdependence. [573] Human persons are created by God

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[572] Ibid.
[573] Gerald J. Beyer, "The Meaning of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching," *Political Theology* 15, no. 1 (2014):

to live in relationship with God and with each other. [574] Solidarity is a multi-dimensional reality that captures what it takes for human society to thrive. Each human being is connected to a web of relations that facilitate each other's flourishing. As earlier noted, this view is expressed by the African concept of *ubuntu.* This also implies that human relationality carries a moral imperative for each person to foster right relationships with others in establishing a just society in which each person can prosper. One of the most basic insights in solidarity is the recognition that the subject cannot flourish or reach her full potential on her own. And that one's own growth and fulfillment as a person is bound up with the flourishing of the rest of humanity.

Hence, human interdependence carries an obligation of co-responsibility toward each other in society. This obligation arises from "the mutual need to preserve those goods on which our moral well-being and happiness depend." [575] Moreover, all human flourishing depends in part, on relational bonds that serve as reliable sources of one's own development. [576] In other words, our well-being as human beings depends of on the self-giving of many other people. Our fortunes are in part due to others' willingness to care for our needs and provide guidance, protection, and companionship. [577] Without this sense of mutuality and sponsorship of others, our own lives would almost be impossible to sustain given the many forces that threat to diminish them. This is what the term *ubuntu* seeks to express. Our humanness is inextricably tied to the humanity of others. It is hard to cherish one's own flourishing without also cherishing the sort of care that others provide which makes human life possible. Hence, every person and institution owe each other the means to good human living. Therefore, human solidarity arises from the recognition that one's being

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[574] Vogt, "Mercy, Solidarity, and Hope," 218.
[575] Beyer, "The Meaning of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching," 15.
[576] Shawn Floyd, "Aquinas and the Obligations of Mercy," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 3 (2009): 461, accessed October 30, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40378115.
[577] Ibid., 463.

and well-being shares in a web of human interdependence and co-nurturing.

Uganda's conflicted reality however, bears witness to the fact that divisions, exclusion, and hostility have crippled the flourishing of persons, communities, and the country. As mentioned above, a reversal of this conflicted reality requires that persons, groups, communities, and institutions accept the responsibility to foster ways that engender the flourishing of each other in a just society. A new way of relation requires that solidarity with the marginalized is not an option one may voluntarily ignore, rather an obligation that is constitutive of what it means to be human and how-to live-in society. An incarnational mission I propose is essential for establishing such solidarity starting with the marginalized victims.

Second, drawing near the other in solidarity helps not only persons but also institutions to analyze social structures and political systems responsible for the conflicted reality. When institutions are in solidarity with victims they have greater potential of investigating oppressive mechanisms and ways in which exclusion occurs.[578] Here solidarity entails concerted action to dismantle structures of social sin and to promote policies that will enhance the dignity and full participation of everyone in society. St. John Paul II described these aspects of solidarity as "a *movement* from recognition that we are all interdependent to a decision to promote a transformed set of relationships of mutuality that support the dignity and flourishing of all people."[579] The participation of all persons, institutions, communities, political groups, and all civil society is crucial to the process of reconciliation in Uganda. Solidarity cannot be pursued by one institution alone. It requires participation of all persons and institutions. In this sense, commitment to solidarity requires a commitment to encounters, action, conversations, and dialogue with those one

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[578] Vogt, "Mercy, Solidarity, and Hope," 219. See also "Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 21st Century, in *Lift Every Voice…* pp. 30-39 at 32

[579] Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis of the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II*, Publication (United States Catholic Conference. Office of Publishing and Promotion Services) ; no. 205-5 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1988), #38-39.

resents.

Third, solidarity not only arises from a Christian moral grounding based on God's love for all and the structure of Jesus' incarnational life but also from an anthropological imperative that human beings need each other to become fully human. As noted above, God reveals the divine reality in and through God's preference for the oppressed.[580] Preference for victims forms a consistent pattern in the Old Testament, where Yahweh is depicted as the father of the orphans, the protector of widows (Ps 65), and the "the defender of Israel." [581] God's drawing near in mercy is the value that remains constant throughout God's self-revelation, providing history its basic direction and content. It thus follows that drawing near to the vulnerable defines what it means to be a creature and a human being directed by the Spirit of God. In this sense, if human beings are to develop as intended by God and historical reality bear hope for all, solidarity should direct an honest engagement with victims.

In sum, solidarity requires an incarnational mission of mercy that enables persons and communities to honestly engagement reality and closely examine the different forces that shape a particular situation, discern the presence of sin and grace therein, and compassionately respond to the demands that situation requires. In turn, the realization of the heaviness of the task becomes more apparent when the subject realizes that in carrying out these obligations one comes face to face with the cross, risking one's life when the forces that seek to oppose the mission loom high. The moral imperative to draw near and respond in solidarity with victims demands perseverance to the original honesty to the task against the forces of oppression. This perseverance has the potential of generating hope, where victims can become their own agents of liberation. As a

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[580] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 123fn23.
[581] John C. Cavadini and Laura Holt, eds., *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Confessing the Mystery of Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 127.

corollary, the fight for justice is an important component of solidarity to which I now turn.

4.2.3 An Incarnational Mission of Mercy in Seeking Justice

Chapter two argued for an understanding of justice that accords with Uganda's sociopolitical history and economic reality. Justice was primarily defined in terms of fostering right relations that eradicate the suffering of victims. Right relations consist of economic empowerment of victims, reclaiming their dignity, humanity, and identity that the dehumanizing acts of violence, alienation, and exclusion deprived them. In addition, justice is a relational virtue; its exercise seeks to eliminate categories of victim and oppressor. As a relational attribute of God justice is manifested in God's turning toward the victim with tenderness, but also demanding the conversion of the oppressor. As such justice is a component of mercy, that is, because God is merciful, God establishes right and just relations among people.

Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter three, mercy (literary *rahamim,* from *rehem* = mother's womb) denotes maternal love. Mercy signifies a deep bond of unity that links a mother to her child, from which springs a particular relationship with the child.[582] As a corollary, mercy is a gift and a way of being human in the world that establishes relational bonds with others.[583] Drawing near in solidarity with victims aims at establishing just social arrangements to liberate those denied of their humanity.[584] In my reading of Mt 25:31-46, I specified that mercy is the measure by which all persons will ultimately be judged. Here the relational bonds established through mercy define what it means to be human by doing justice. On the contrary, injustice is a violation of persons, interpersonal just relations, mutual responsibilities, and obligations[585] The

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[582] Wojciech Zyzak, "Mercy as a Theological Term," *The Person and the Challenges. The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II* 5, no. 1 (May 1, 2015): 140, accessed October 29, 2021, http://czasopisma.upjp2.edu.pl/thepersonandthechallenges/article/view/931.

[583] Linda Meyer, *The Justice of Mercy*, Law, meaning, and violence (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 26.

[584] Zyzak, "Mercy as a Theological Term," 141.

[585] Thomas W. Porter, "Justice Matters! Theology and a Relational, Restorative Justice," in *Healing God's People:*

web of interconnectedness and interdependence is disrupted by wounds committed by some members of society. In order to restore right and just relations, one should "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). Restoration of just and right relations expresses an incarnational mercy that empowers victims as agents of their own liberation.

In addition, an important aspect in establishing right relations corresponds to the obligation of government institutions to form just legislative policies. This is a crucial step that seeks to eliminate structural forms of oppression particularly unjust laws. In the absence of a functioning democratic society however, civil institutions have the capacity and resources for advocacy; to lobby the legislative branch of government to abrogate unjust laws and enact those that promote just social arrangements. Civil institutions should demand legal changes for instance the high taxation of the poor, illegal land evictions, embezzlement of public funds; as well as fight the abuse of human rights for instance freedom of expression, illegal detentions, torture, unfair treatment and imprisonment of government critics among others. At the time of this writing, security forces in Uganda have a notorious practice of re-arresting and locking up in unknown places, political suspects who have been released by courts on bail. Justice requires institutional solidarity in order to put pressure on the executive branch of government to uphold fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, a crucial aspect in restoring right relations in Uganda is the recognition that most of the victims are women and children. Women as the bedrock of Uganda's society that have a great potential of forming advocacy groups, actively denouncing injustices, offering legal assistance, and demanding redress of crimes against women, children and their loved ones. Institutional solidarity should help women organizations to develop their capacities to rebuild Uganda's society.

Theological and Pastoral Approaches, ed. Thomas A. Kane, CSP (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2013), 67.

It becomes evident that justice requires sustained efforts to go beyond short-term solutions and temporary aid toward long-term institutional change. Justice requires solidarity, that is, a unity of compassion and justice. Justice therefore, is not "a feeling of vague compassion."[586] Rather, it strives ultimately to enable all people to participate in and benefit from the common good.[587] An incarnational mercy that actualizes just arrangements in society offers grounds for hope through empowerment of victims as the next section demonstrates.

4.2.4 An Incarnational Mission of Mercy: Hope Through Empowerment

Sobrino notes that Jesus came "following a tradition of hope for oppressed history…that his life and mission was above all "in continuity with a hope-filled tradition.[588] To begin with, the fight for justice introduces hope at two levels: At the first level there is a possibility of establishing a collective consciousness, that is, a unified experience of life capable of shaping a new form of identity between victims and non-victims. This consciousness has a potential of integrating them as equal human persons, that is, both as living images of God and companions in society. Beyer calls this collective consciousness an 'intellectual dimension of solidarity' that relates to the attitude of mutual compassion among members of a community. It involves "becoming aware of their deep similarities and interdependence, and deepening the sense of experiencing the needs of others just as we experience our own needs." [589] There is also recognition of shared humanity that opens our hearts to "hear the cry of the wounded" among us.[590] Here victims are not mere objects of charity, rather sisters and brothers and fellow collaborators in God's work of reconciliation.

At a second level, hope comprises helping survivors become agents of their liberation.

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[586] Jon Sobrino and Juan Hernandez Pico, *Theology of Christian Solidarity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 11, 19–23.
[587] Beyer, "The Meaning of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching," 17.
[588] Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, 74.
[589] Gerald J. Beyer, "The Meaning of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching," *Political Theology* 15, no. 1 (2014): 15.
[590] Sobrino and Hernandez Pico, *Theology of Christian Solidarity*, 8, 11.

Institutional solidarity is a crucial resource to help empower victims. Establishing solidarity in civil society; universities, business unions, professional associations, churches, and cultural institutions for the sake of victims is critical. Victims can be empowered to heal their trauma for instance through group counseling, spiritual direction, education, support groups, helping them form economic development groups, eradicating the barriers of red tape bureaucracy, access loans, low taxes, and run businesses for their own sustenance. As chapter one demonstrated, a system of clientelism and patronage keeps the majority of the poor tied to handouts from the elite thus sustaining the very system that victimizes them. Unequal economic development particularly between north and south is one of the contentious issues in Uganda's sociopolitical and economic arrangements. This inequality has been one of the causes of ethnic resentment and divisions. Chapter five will suggest ways in which this can be achieved. Here it suffices to say that solidarity at the level of civil society has far-reaching influence in accessing resources that can empower the impoverished majority.

Moreover, institutional solidarity for the sake of victims can help in rendering transparent the complex economic, political, and social structures that conceal vast mechanisms of oppression, exposing the agents behind their victimization. This can offer a better analysis of the situation by revealing exploitative processes, expose and condemn the counterfeit narrative of the oppressors and the false justifications of patronage that maintains the status quo and the comfortable blindness of the elite to social injustices. Institutional solidarity helps expose the truth of conflicted reality that demands to recognize grievances and the restoration of just relations. With institutional solidarity victims can have the capacity to become, as John Paul II states, "agents of their own labor and history."[591] Victims should take charge of their liberation and development, and not

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[591] Matthew L. Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), ix.

become objects of charity. If victims are empowered they can discover their own talents and potential in contributing to society and offering values that enrich themselves as well as non-victims. An incarnational mission that fosters a willingness to enter into the reality of the other provides ways of mutual enrichment for all.

4.2.4.1 The Evangelizing Potential of Victims to non-Victims

While the oppressed are not themselves exempt from sin, nevertheless victims offer a special way of encountering salvific values. As the General Council at Puebla attested, "the poor have an evangelizing potential…For the poor challenge the Church constantly, summoning it to conversion; and many of the poor incarnate in their lives the evangelical values of solidarity, service, simplicity, and openness to accepting the gift of God."[592] There are humanizing values evident in the experiences of their communities such as generosity, compassion, and sharing of their limited resources. This evangelizing potential of the poor is not limited to the situation in Latin America; in Uganda, solidarity with victims has the potential of bringing a spirit of renewal to the broader church and society as they work to transform the oppressive reality in which they live.[593] Puebla highlights a fundamental relation between the setting of the poor and its potential to offer salvific value to those who engage in it. I would like to further articulate this relation in two ways: The condition of victims exposes the unadulterated effects of social sin that those in power try to conceal and the need for redemption of those involved in it. It also offers opportunity for both victims and non-victims to work together as companions for justice and communion.

To begin with, in the setting of the poor one encounters the effects of a deeply conflicted society.[594] The condition of the poor unambiguously lays open the stark reality of social sin and

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[592] Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano, *Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary*, ed. John Eagleson and Philip J. Scharper (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 265–66 Final Document no.1147.
[593] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 166.
[594] Sobrino, "No Salvation Outside the Poor," 49.

its effects on human persons and their communities. The presence of victims puts a human face on the injustice of oppression and the need to struggle against them. Drawing close to the condition of victims should help analyze ways of redeeming persons from such a negative reality. Victims challenge others and each other to move to indignation against the indignity of their condition, toward compassion, and even radical conversion.[595]

Second, solidarity with victims has the potential of establishing the kind of relationships needed to heal an unequal and conflicted world. Willingness to engage victims offers the possibility of social reconciliation by affording all human persons to live humanely. Sobrino although the correlation between the world of victims and salvation is a mystery, "some of the elements are not all mysterious."[596] Victims exhibit commitment and encouragement to each other against the evils they face daily. Their solidarity should inspire friendship and collaboration capable of generating a profound sense of communion and shared responsibility among themselves and the non-victims. In this sense, victims offer the capacity of fostering mutually beneficial sharing of gifts in society.[597] This engagement defies the traditional notion that envisions assistance as always flowing in one direction, that is, from the world of the nonpoor or abundance to the poor. In Uganda mutual sharing of gifts may undermine existing pattern of social paternalism, clientelism, and domination.

Lastly, while compassionate engagement with victims must acknowledge the vast gap that separates victims from non-victims, it ultimately reaffirms the true communal and interrelated nature of humankind. For Christians, it models how we are called to mercifully draw close to one another.[598] The evangelizing potential of victims comes as gift to non-victims when they discover

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[595] Ibid., 50.
[596] Ibid., 49.
[597] Ibid., 63.
[598] Valiente, *Liberation through Reconciliation*, 166.

gifts of hope, love, and cooperation among victims. There ought to be a reciprocity and exchange

of these gifts between victims and non-victims to form communities of solidarity. It is within these

communities of solidarity, all too often forged by oppression and persecution that the victims of

conflict can find healing and meaning.

In sum, an incarnational mission of mercy has the potential of providing a pathway toward

social reconciliation insofar as it endeavors to eradicate divisions and inequality. God's double

kenosis of self-emptying in the person and mission of Jesus of Nazareth inspires the incarnational

mission of mercy as a model of reconciliation. This all-inclusive approach necessarily involves the

condition of the oppressors for whom Jesus offered himself as well. Faith in Jesus and Christian

practice do no abandon the oppressor to his own fate, rather seek his conversion, forgiveness, and

reintegration into community.

SECTION III: AN INCARNATIONAL MISSION AND THE OPPRESSOR

4.3 An Incarnational Mission of Mercy: Openness to the Conversion of Oppressor

Chapter two offered a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship that ought to exist between victim and oppressor in reconciling society. Here, I articulate how an incarnational mission of mercy is a model for fostering the transformation, conversion, and integration of the offender into society. As theologian Geraldine Smyth writes, "overcoming hostility is not simply a matter of breaking down the enmity, but of offering hospitality and enabling one another to flourish and have life to the full."[599] The central argument of this section is based on the fact that in Jesus God offers an invitation to conversion even to those who are hostile to the values of the Kingdom. In like manner, the incarnational mission aims at incorporating the oppressor into the reconciliation process by enabling him to be accountable to justice, embrace the offer of forgiveness, and respond to the demand for conversion. In the next section I articulate how an incarnational mission of mercy helps the exercise of justice with regard to the oppressor.

4.3.1 Aspects of Mercy and Justice

Here, I highlight how mercy engenders a twofold approach to establishing just and right relations: The approach seeks to promote the healing of victims and the offender's transformation and reintegration into society. I have dealt with the first aspect in chapter two, here I elaborate on the second one. I argue that an incarnational mission of mercy offers the offenders opportunity to exercise their obligation toward victims and society they have grievously hurt. This enables the perpetrator to reclaim his dignity a human person and to make right and just relationships destroyed by his actions. I have to point out that the opportunity is not just offered after the injustices have been fully acknowledged and removed, rather the opportunity is part of a fundamental struggle

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[599] Smyth OP, "Respecting Boundaries and Bonds: Journeys of Identity and Beyond," 141.

against injustice itself. The mission toward a more just society inspires the movement to engage the oppressor.

Hence, when mercy is expressed as openness and leniency toward an offender,[600] it can help change the offender's condition and contribute to his well-being as a member of a community.[601] This approach is crucial to Uganda's context. In chapter two I demonstrated that some of perpetrators of the heinous crimes are victims themselves, as in the case of abducted child soldiers. Here leniency refers to the dimension of mercy that orients justice toward promoting good will among persons and/or groups. Philosopher John Tasioulas asserts that mercy must include a concern for those who have committed punishable offenses.[602] He contends that mercy should in general reflect a love of all persons regardless of moral condition. As noted above, in Uganda's context one ought to consider ways of establishing right relations that do not exclude the perpetrators. While some form punishment should be considered for those in power most responsible for the heinous crimes, justice should not consist mainly of retributive forms. The reason for this approach, is primarily to induce the wrongdoers' ability to act humanely with a new possibility of living differently. In addition, since actions of perpetrators are linked to their ethnic identity and relations, a delicate approach is required to maintain restorative forms of redressing the past. In fact, this approach unites my understanding of mercy and justice, in such a way that the willingness to engage the reality of the other should seek to establish right relations. In this sense, offering mercy does not renounce the pursuit of justice. Rather, mercy involves attending to the demands of justice in order to transform the condition of the victims, offender, and the whole society by establishing right relations. Mercy inspires the offer of forgiveness in the next section.

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[600] Claudia Card, "On Mercy," *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 2 (1972): 183, accessed October 30, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2183992.
[601] Floyd, "Aquinas and the Obligations of Mercy," 452.
[602] John Tasioulas, "Mercy," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 103 (2003): 103, accessed October 30, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4545388.

4.3.2 Mercy as an Offer of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is presented as a moral gesture toward the offender, designed to restore his moral standing with victims and society.[603] In chapter two I advanced the view that Uganda's context requires a specific understanding of forgiveness primarily intended for the healing the victim. I illustrated that forgiveness in a context of decades of oppression, repression, and counter violence presents some dilemmas. To begin with, victims may not know who their oppressors were, partly because anonymity or if known, they may be dead. The anonymity of offenders however, often generates the attribution of culpability to ethnic collectives represented by the elite of the group in power. In these contexts, it becomes hard for survivors to offer forgiveness to anonymous offenders or dead perpetrators.

The second dilemma comprises instances where the identities of oppressors are known, whereas the prospect of accepting responsibility for their heinous crimes is highly unlikely. Given the political circumstances in Uganda at the time of this writing, there is hardly a possibility that the current perpetrators will ever be induced to acknowledge their crimes, even in some symbolic way. Because of this sociopolitical context, I argued that the process of forgiveness should be directed first and foremost to the healing of victims and their posterity. Nevertheless, forgiveness must be coupled with other restorative approaches in order to reinforce its effectiveness in safeguarding victims' dignity and the prevention of the recurrence of crimes. As mentioned above, institutional solidarity in civil society is a critical resource to protect and empower victims. Nevertheless, it is clear that forgiveness is not intended to undermine or ignore the culpability of the offender.[604] Rather, primarily promote the well-being of victims.

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[603] Louis E. Newman, "Balancing Justice and Mercy: Reflections on Forgiveness in Judaism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 41, no. 3 (2013): 435, accessed November 2, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24586078.
[604] Ibid.

In addition, forgiveness should be pursued in ways that seek to heal resentment and promote the change of attitudes that dehumanizes the other. As already noted in chapter two, forgiveness does not necessarily result in reconciliation, although genuine reconciliation cannot happen without genuine forgiveness. I emphasize a form of forgiveness that seeks an end to hostility, exclusion, and resentment. This understanding of forgiveness is inspired by God's love for all, and that those who believe in God ought to imitate God in treating those they deem less worthy of their love. Here the purpose of forgiveness is essentially restorative.[605] This means that it intends to restore a state of moral stability that was disturbed by a history of hate, oppression, and violence.[606] In the next section, I articulate the demand for the oppressor's conversion. The demand for conversion seeks to transform the oppressor and act as a guarantee of their willingness to change and be integrated into society.

4.3.3 Mercy and the Demand for Conversion

I have argued that some crucial aspects of offering forgiveness to the oppressor consist of the aim of offering them opportunities for transformation, acting humanely, and being restored to right and just relationships with victims and society. As mentioned above, this transformation is work of God's grace, it goes beyond rational explanations or any result human projects can achieve on their own. The demand for conversion with express commitment to repentance however, helps guarantee to some extent the sincerity perpetrators toward restoring right relations in society. This commitment is a form of security to members of society to trust the former offenders. Moreover, offenders are people of God for whom God desires conversion and sanctity. [607] Hence, mercy extended to offenders is done in relation to God who opens the possibility of the oppressor's

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[605] Ibid., 439.
[606] Ibid., 441.
[607] Aquinas Thomas, *Summa Theologica, II-II*, n.d., q.25, a 8, see also q. 23, a1, ad 2.

conversion and entering into the Kingdom.

Second, conversion is not only sanctioned by society, but also a salvific movement of faith in Jesus. Jesus' message of the Kingdom both offered hope to the poor and demanded radical change of the oppressors.[608] The offer of God's unconditional love opens the capacity for repentance like in the case of Zacchaeus (cf Luke 19:1-10) and Levi the tax collector (cf Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). Miroslav Volf writes that just as the oppressed must be liberated from the suffering caused by oppression, so the oppressors must be liberated from the injustice committed through oppression.[609] This implies that the oppressor must be offered the means to abandon his sin, that is, the attitudes, practices and structures that reinforce and maintain his identity as oppressor. In other words, the oppressor must be liberated from the character of oppressor and be encouraged to act in humane ways.

Moreover, the conversion of the oppressor offers hope for both victim and oppressor insofar he is willing to go through the process of transformation. Since "God does not abandon the godless to their evil but gives the divine self for them in order to receive them into divine communion," a believer should be open to the possibility of the conversion of the offender.[610] Faith in Christ who "died (even) for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6) affirms an overarching reality of God's self-giving love for all human persons. The enemy too needs to be saved if the whole society is to be saved.

In sum, my proposal maintains that an incarnational mission of mercy should create an authentic way of being human and a Christian insofar as it responds to God's mercy in Jesus. This approach incorporates the offender who needs forgiveness and conversion to be restored to right

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[608] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, 112.
[609] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 23.
[610] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 23.

and just relations. A demand for the conversion of the oppressor requires establishing processes and events that promote the building of relationships as the basis of both eradicating the suffering of victims, enmity and foster justice, forgiveness, conversion, and reconciliation. This means that reconciliation is fundamentally constituted by engaging humans in relationships toward which other transforming initiatives are directed. In this sense, the incarnational structure of Jesus' life does not simply provide us with formulas for reconciliation, rather inspires and directs the process by his enduring Spirit. The next section argues that the whole society requires processes and events for integration through mutual trust and cooperation.

SECTION IV: INTEGRATION OF SOCIETY: BUILDING MUTUAL TRUST AND COOPERATION

Earlier, I argued that the victim-oppressor dynamic in Uganda's sociopolitical reality is intertwined within the conflicted ethnic identity and relations. Because of this, in this section I argue that an incarnational mission should aim at creating mutual trust through cooperation. In this way persons and groups have opportunities to work together for common causes. This approach opens opportunities for transformation of attitudes that are relevant for positive ethnic relations. As mentioned above, divisions, exclusion, and alienation are not exclusively limited to macrolevel political and economic structures and practices, they are pervasive in the common space of daily human interactions including workplace or religious space. Given the prevalence of exclusion and alienation based on ethnic identity, with their concomitant stereotypes, fear, and distrust, the effects they generate do not cease when social order is restored. Rather, the inability to view former antagonists as trusted co-partners in the new social order continues even after sociopolitical and economic structures are reestablished.

In Uganda's political history, when a new regime takes over power, much attention is often paid to judicial processes to redress the past and to reconstruct infrastructure, while little effort is devoted to establishing the social ethos that maintains the everyday person-to-person relations in the common space. While attending to the grand scale of the political, economic, and social structures is important, equally significant are the personal and communal relations. For this reason, I argue that healing, repairing, and rebuilding the social fabric at the person-to-person level is crucial to establishing positive relations between persons and communities, and consequently for the transformation and integration of society. Repairing interpersonal and group relations is as important as fixing ruined social institutions and structures,[611] because in my view building the

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[611] Jodi Halpern and Harvey M. Weinstein, "Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation," *Human Rights*

social ethos upholds these structures and practices. The rebuilding of interpersonal connections, networks, and relations among persons has often been referred to as *social capital* by some scholars.

Political scientist Robert Putnam defines *social capital* as "connections among individuals, social networks, and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."[612] Rebuilding social capital is critical to the transformation of identities of former antagonists and fostering cohesion between persons and communities in ways that enhance reciprocal and mutually beneficial social relations which sustain legal, political, and social structures. In fact, this understanding of social capital accords with my argument for the importance of establishing institutional solidarity in civil society. In addition, Putman envisions building reciprocal social relations as a process that involves reaching beyond one's own group in order to create interconnectedness that recognizes human interdependence among persons and groups.[613] Such networks of relationships, however, do not automatically begin to emerge when social order is regained in the aftermath of conflict. Rather, they require conscious efforts that promote individual interactions and encounters with an openness to cooperate and trust the *other*. The thesis of this section therefore is that in order to attain social integration, an incarnation mission should aim at establishing trust between persons and groups through mutual cooperation. This thesis is broken down into two arguments: First, I advance the view that drawing near the other should seek to counter *differentiation* and *otherness* and the dehumanizing effects of exclusion and alienation. Second, I contend that trust and cooperation are two reinforcing aspects of social integration that should be achieved through mutually beneficial events, processes, and interests.

Quarterly 26, no. 3 (2004): 263, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20069745.
[612] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 19.
[613] Halpern and Weinstein, "Rehumanizing the Other," 264.

4.4.1 Incarnational Mission of Mercy in the Contravention of Ethnic Alienation

4.4.1.1 Drawing near to Accept the Authentic Other

To begin with, drawing near the other with the express intention of engaging their context offers the subject closer proximity to re-evaluate her position with regard to the constructed negative identities of the other. When one becomes attentive to the other's distinct reality with mercy, there is a possibility of a conversion of intellect. Alienation and exclusion create distance between persons and communities even when they occupy common spaces in neighborhoods and communities. Countering otherness means crossing barriers of stereotypes, narratives, and discourses that keep the other locked in constructed collectives, in order to accept the commonness and diversity that each embodies. Again, the traditional African value of "*ubuntu*" captures the essence of recognizing that another person's world should intersect with the subject's own reality in a common space. In a manner of speaking, one's own personhood must be linked with the personhood of the other to such a degree that the manner in which one perceives or interprets the reality of another affects the subject's own reality precisely because that interpretation has an impact on the subject's relation with the other. In other words, the identity of the other affects the subject's context, which is a product of human interdependence. When one takes the courage to intersect the other's reality with mercy, the subject may begin to recognize similar aspirations, desires, and dreams, as well as common fears, struggles, and wounds. As the *ubuntu* ethos would suggest, there is need for face-to-face encounter between persons and communities. This aspect of human relations at the most basic anthropological level requires processes, activities, and events that help bring persons and communities together to create and maintain transformed identities and relations. These processes and events can happen at every level of society starting from Basic Christian Communities, Parishes, Dioceses, schools, colleges, and universities. At the same time, they are not limited to religious institutions, they should include cultural encounters in villages,

communities, geographic regions and between different ethnic groups.

In addition, genuine human interactions should aim at rehumanization of the other, and deal with issues of collective identity of persons whose personhood is tied to legacies of negative stereotyping and actions of the past offenders. In this sense, social reconstruction arguably must begin with seeing persons as interdependent persons. Moreover, the resentment, exclusion, and violence based on ethnic identity are frequently intimate and personal. For this reason, repair must also begin to function on that level. As mentioned above, whereas polarization of persons and groups are social processes where in-group and out-group boundaries are formed and differences become magnified along with a host of sociopolitical and economic factors, the effects of these processes are profoundly personal. What starts out as negative stereotyping and differentiation in society often becomes pervasive to such a degree that *persons* of the opposing group are delegitimized. [614] Nevertheless, when violence breaks out, it is happens at a personal level involving families and neighbors. In this sense, relating to people in terms of collectives diminishes their individuality and dignity as persons. Therefore, the challenge one faces in social integration is how to construct a new social fabric in which human dignity is returned to persons from whom collective categorizations have removed all positive personal attributes.[615] Because of this fact the social integration should include person-to-person level of rebuilding society, that is, the recognition of human persons, not mere collectives. Rehumanizing the other involves the recognition that each person is a complex, nonidealized individual.[616]

Furthermore, I suggest that one of the main aspects of establishing positive ethnic relations begins with the education or "cultivation of the heart" [617] through programs, activities, and events.

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[614] Ibid., 267.
[615] Ibid.
[616] Ibid., 274.
[617] Ibid., 268.

The re-education of attitudes is an ongoing process that requires resilience by lifelong encounters, conversations, and activities. This is because there is a proclivity to relapse into old forms of alienation, exclusion, dehumanization, othering, and differentiation. An incarnational mission of mercy I suggest consists of encounters and conversations that can create the potential of shifting ways of seeing the other in idealized, static, and frozen in images of collectivity.

In sum, contravening ethnic alienation consists in making the shift from addressing collective identities to relating to the individual persons in their contexts. This happens when persons are willing to draw near to each other with an express intention of reconstructing new identities and relationships. In encountering the other the subject must resist the tendency of perceiving other persons as part of the negatively stereotyped and idealized collectives. Establishing proximity to the reality of the other has the potential of reinterpreting them as persons. This can help in the development of mutual trust to which I now turn.

4.4.2 Drawing Near the Other: Building Trust through Mutual Cooperation

As I alluded to above, in the wake of violence society often resorts to reestablishing social relations by redressing past crimes through legal mechanisms and other forms of reckoning. For instance, efforts are mounted on the different forms of truth telling and judicial processes. Although these processes are crucial, it is often implicitly assumed that they are the main component of reconstructing the social fabric that has been heavily damaged by oppression and related injustices. Moreover, they are not the only important aspects required for social integration and the functioning of a just society. Institutions that enforce social order and justice at the macro level of society may not restore the much-desired social cohesion between person-to-person, community to community, ethnic group to ethnic group.

In Uganda's historical context, sociopolitical institutions and structures have not often maintained a just social order particularly because the ethnically structured regimes have

manipulated them for their own interests. With the absence of social cohesion that holds people together dictators have found it much easier to divide society along ethnic lines. For this reason, I propose that the most basic level that helps safeguard the social fabric and sustain a just society should consist of the establishment of mutual trust between peoples through cooperation toward common goals. I regard the establishment of mutual trust as a bond that can hold groups together for the proper functioning of a just society. Although there is no clear consensus among scholars on the precise definition of trust, there is agreement that trust plays a significant role in the functioning of social groups and societies.[618] The lack of consensus is due to the fact that there are different types of trust, with different distinctions and terminologies according to different disciplines. Disciplines range from economics, business, political science, sociology, psychology, theology among others. [619] Here, I will generally refer to trust as a positive expectation about the attitude and action of another party.[620] Trust involves a willingness to act on the basis of the words and actions of another[621] toward a positive outcome.

Trust is relevant for the reconstruction of society since it enhances social cohesion in achieving common goals. I advance the view that mutual trust through cooperation is an essential aspect in Uganda's society in order to uphold the political, social, and economic systems. In the absence of political institutions that sustain a justice society all persons, communities, organizations, groups, that is, civil society in general become the primary custodians of the mechanisms that can build and uphold trust in society. Chapter five will advance the view that the Catholic Church in Uganda should play a leading role in initiating cooperation in civil society

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[618] Karen S. Cook, *Trust in Society* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001), xxvii.
[619] Elizabeth Wilke, Paul K. Davis, and Christoper S. Chivvis, "Establishing Social Conditions of Trust and Cooperation," in *Dilemmas of Intervention: Social Science for Stabilization and Reconstruction*, ed. Paul K. Davis (RAND Corporation, 2011), 191.
[620] Morton Deutsch, "Cooperation and Competition," in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, ed. Morton Deutsch and Peter T. Coleman (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000), 27.
[621] Wilke, Davis, and Chivvis, "Establishing Social Conditions of Trust and Cooperation," 190.

toward the building of trust among people. Furthermore, mutual trust and cooperation are crucial for long-term social integration, transformation, and reconciliation. Nevertheless, in Uganda's context building trust through cooperation presents some challenges.

In the aftermath of conflict where many people were complicit through their silence or collaboration with an oppressive regime, there is less likelihood that persons will trust each other to the degree necessary for a smooth running of a new just society. There are many potential barriers to trust, including ongoing fear, stereotypes, biases, feelings of betrayal, ethnic group pressure, ongoing exclusion, alienation and memories of torture and violence.[622] Even in a common space such as the work environment, villages or towns many people might view their fellow employees or neighbors with ongoing suspicion and resentment. As noted above, in a system of patronage, government spies, informers, perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders, and victims are intermixed. Rebuilding trust in a new social order is challenging because reputations for trustworthiness of people are either heavily compromised, uncertain or demonstrably poor.[623] Trusting beneficiaries of the former oppressive regime or out-group members carries considerable risk of harm, thus giving people strong incentive to turn inward and only trust co-ethnics.

Nevertheless, the critical questions that guide this discussion are: How can people learn to trust each other after decades of re-socializing them as enemies in the sociopolitical and economic space? How can people meaningfully integrate after decades of mutual exclusion, hostility, and violence? I propose establishing mutual trust through cooperation in civil society organizations. This proposal accords with institutional solidarity I suggested earlier. My proposal is based on ability of the Catholic Church in Uganda to mobilize civil society institutions in creating activities,

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[622] Halpern and Weinstein, "Rehumanizing the Other," 270.
[623] Sam Whitt, "Institutions and Ethnic Trust: Evidence from Bosnia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 2 (2010): 273, accessed May 18, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27808690.

events, and processes that help persons and groups learn to cooperate for common causes. I assume that through cooperation, people can learn to work together and gradually form bonds of trust that help build strong positive relationships. Mutual cooperation creates opportunities to recognize the boundless interdependence among human beings. It also inspires their ability to cope with risks and garner possibilities of self-fulfillment.[624] In the next section, I further elaborate on my understanding of mutual cooperation.

4.4.2.1 Mutual Cooperation

I claim that coexistence without trust and cooperation, is superficial and fragile. Just below the surface looms suspicion, resentment, and even hatred. As has often happened in Uganda's history political elite easily manipulate a fragile situation to divide people for their political interests. I therefore propose that mutual cooperation should focus on processes, events and activities that generate mutual benefit precisely centered on human needs. In such cases cooperation should include; (1) incentives, (2) guarantees, and (3) building a legacy of positive interaction that can be repeated. Interests should be negotiated so that goals, expectations, timelines, and deterrents are set in place. Expectations must be reasonable, and, to avoid confusion or misinterpretation all expected behavior and measurement of goals should be explicitly stated beforehand.[625] The benefit-oriented cooperation helps build relationship-based trust, which can become stronger and more enduring over time.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that activities geared toward women empowerment should take priority. Empowering women in promoting events of encounter, dialogue, and development such as the National Association of Women Organizations in Uganda

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[624] Trudy Govier, *Social Trust and Human Communities* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), xi.
[625] Wilke, Davis, and Chivvis, "Establishing Social Conditions of Trust and Cooperation," 226fn7.

(NOWAU) that addresses a range of issues including peace and security, health care and economic development is crucial.[626] This is because in Uganda's context women are the voiceless victims of conflicts, oppression, and violence and yet they comprise the very backbone of society particularly at the grassroots. I advance the view that social reconciliation cannot easily be achieved without the active involvement and leading role of women in contributing to the building of Uganda's social fabric and social integration. Women constitute the majority of people in the country. They form an untapped reservoir of resources for social transformation. In chapter five I will articulate different forms of women networking processes and programs in the country through activities that can contribute to building of positive and sustainable social relations.

Positive interactions have the potential of enhancing relation-based trust among persons and groups. Through cooperation relational ties may organically emerge when the fear and resentment of the *other* begins to dissipate. Mutual cooperation may enhance the ability to view the other as person and co-partner in human interdependence and flourishing. It also should promote the pursuit of common goals, that is, building a humane society based on principles of justice, forgiveness, mutual understanding, acceptance, development, and reconciliation. Along with national level mechanisms of cooperation efforts should aim at developing grassroots programs that facilitate interpersonal interactions.

While in Uganda's context political trust is a far cry from what approximates an ideal political situation, there is possibility that in the long-haul governments may begin to operate according to the standards of a just society. I assume that a strong citizenry built on mutual cooperation in civil society has the potential of challenging governments to act justly and enhance political trust. Citizens may eventually begin to trust the government provided they are satisfied

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[626] "NAWOU – The National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda," n.d., accessed January 24, 2022, https://nawouganda.ug/.

with policies and its public organizational performance. [627] Trust is an indicator of a positive direction toward reconciliation that goes beyond compromises or physically bringing people together.[628]

In sum, I have argued in this section that the incarnational mission of mercy not only involves victim and oppressor; it involves the entire society. In Uganda's context, the ethnic other is part and parcel of the conflicted reality in which the victim-oppressor dynamic is framed. Social reconciliation would be lacking in the most crucial aspect if it ignored this component of the country's sociopolitical, economic, religious, and anthropological reality. Reconstruction of the social fabric calls for ways of contravening differentiation and otherness. Reestablishing human relations and structures of justice needs to include such social processes as transforming attitudes, behaviors, expectations, and promoting social networks. The extent to which positive encounters and cooperation among persons of different groups occurs, has a long-term impact on whether reconciliation will be sustained or not. Key to social integration is the establishment of trust through cooperation in mutually beneficial activities, processes, and events. The aim is to enhance closeness, collaboration, and gradual social cohesion. In the next chapter, I will suggest some events, processes, and activities that may enhance social reconciliation.

4.5 CONCLUSION

I have argued in this chapter that an incarnational mission of mercy, namely, drawing near to the *other* has a potential for interpreting and transforming the condition of the victim, oppressor, the ethnic other, and Uganda's society as a whole. As chapter one illustrated, the main obstacle to

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[627] Andrés Casas-Casas, Nathalie Mendez, and Juan Federico Pino, "Trust and Prospective Reconciliation: Evidence From a Protracted Armed Conflict," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 15, no. 3 (2020): 304, accessed May 18, 2021, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1542316620945968.
[628] Laura Stovel, *Long Road Home: Building Reconciliation and Trust in Post-War Sierra Leone*, Series on Transitional Justice 2 (Portland, OR: Intersentia, 2010), 224.

reconciliation in Uganda is broken human relations in a threefold manner; anthropological, sociopolitical, and spiritual. Broken human relations generate structures and practices of injustice against the other. Conflicted ethnic relations unfold in the sociopolitical and economic realms as well religious domains. The incarnational mission of mercy I propose consists of the willingness and courage to draw near the other and engage their reality both in personal and institutional dimensions.

This engagement should begin with solidarity with the victim in fostering justice. In addition, engaging the oppressor is crucial to restoring their humanity and fostering more humane ways of acting and being. The reality of victim-oppressor in Uganda's historical context is complex and ambivalent, it is undergirded by ethnic frameworks of socialization and relation over decades. The ethnic *other* is conscripted in the sociopolitical and economic conflicts between persons of different groups. It is important to establish mutual trust through mutual cooperation in order to envision social integration. Here it is vital to promote structural transformation that enhances positive attitudes, identities, and practices.

Mutual cooperation in the daily interactions at the person-to-person and community-to-community level may help promote mutual trust. Hence, the process of social reconciliation requires both interpersonal encounters as well as institutional and structural transformation. All these levels should be synchronized. I emphasize that at the heart of the processes, events, and activities there should be a deliberate intention to prevent forming negative identities, resentment, exclusion, and oppression. Chapter five will suggest a Christian praxis in which these processes, events, and activities offer the potential of short and long-term transformation of Uganda's society toward social reconciliation. Participating in the life of the *other* should break down barriers of fear, mistrust, and resentment between persons and communities of different ethnic groups. Ultimately, the incarnational mission of mercy should help establish mutual trust, acceptance,

cooperation, and a reconciling society.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENCOUNTER AS A BASIC ECCLESIASTICAL PRAXIS FOR AN INCARNATIONAL MISSION OF MERCY TOWARD SOCIAL RECONCILIATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this final chapter is to offer a pastoral response to the three-fold problem chapter one raised, namely, Uganda's ethnic fragmentation in its sociopolitical, economic, and religious dimensions. I propose the 'event of *encounter*' as a practical approach that actualizes the Church's (people of God) incarnational mission of mercy. Encounter, as I describe it, comprises physical presence, conversations, communications, and collaborations among persons within the church and society. This involves person-to-person, community-to-community, group-to-group, and institutions-to-institution engagements that shape new reconciling attitudes, identities, and arrangements, and ultimately define a common journey. Encounter primarily seeks to create an environment of listening to one another, generating mutual understanding, fostering a change of attitudes, establishing new practices, and creating communion both within the church and society as a whole. The dual orientation of *encounter*, that is, within the church (*ad intra*) and outside it (*ad extra*) seeks to foster its mission of reconciliation by being 'salt of the earth and light of the world' (cf Mt 5:13-16). This orientation also presupposes partnership, that is, in its mission the church needs the talents and opportunities society offers in the process of reconciliation. As pointed out in chapter three, historical reality though conflicted, is imbued with grace and goodness. It is not all bad news or evil – within it, there are potentialities for hope. In a sense, this is not an exclusive endeavor by the church, it is an invitation to the rest of society in such a way that the event of *encounter* provides a comprehensive way of confronting problems of alienation, exclusion, and divisions and shaping new reconciling identities and practices.

To begin with, encounter specifies a particular *modus vivendi et operandi* in the Church as a communion of ecclesial communities empowered by the Spirit and gathered by their faith in Christ regardless of ethnicity, geographic region, language, or culture. It expresses the call to gather as one assembly of God, take an active part in the Eucharistic celebration, and be sent on the mission of evangelization. I advance the view that in order for the church in Uganda to confront ethnic fragmentation and its effects, the clergy, laity, and religious should first and foremost foster communion within their own communities, particularly among the different ecclesial provinces that comprise different ethnic groups. Encounter among persons of different ethnic regions within the church helps to concretize the unity of the one family of God. This unity requires pastoral arrangements that promote human interactions. The oft-cited statement of Desiré Joseph Mecier, a Belgian cardinal applies to Uganda's context. Mecier stated that "In order to unite with one another, we must love one another; in order to love one another, we must know one another; in order to know one another, we must go and meet each other."[629] For Uganda, what Mercier expresses points to the need to establish unity within the church itself, then among all believers in Christ, other religious traditions, and the entire society. This need warrants a movement that begins from the church (ad intra) to other institutions (ad extra). Encounter is a particularly crucial pastoral praxis that helps create unity since most of the ecclesial communities [provinces, dioceses, and parishes] are not only delineated by ethnic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries but also divisions. In this sense, ecclesial communities can be seen as cultural and linguistic enclaves that insulate fellow Christians from mutual interactions with one another across dioceses of other ethnic groups. While there are visible signs of collegiality among bishops at the episcopal conference and

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[629] Darkie J. Smit, "For Geoffrewy Wainwright: Spirituality, Worship, Confession, and the Unity of the Church: A Story from South Africa," in *Remembering Theologians - Doing Theology: Collected Essays*, ed. Robert Vosloo, Beyers Naudé Center Series of Public Theology 5 (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2013), 493-515, at 506.

provincial levels, there is a need to establish corresponding collegiality among priests and laity. This would help different ecclesial communities in the different geographic regions to interact at the parish, sub-parish, and Small Christian Community levels.

In his emphasis on a synodal church, Pope Francis envisions pastoral arrangements that go beyond mere 'episcopal collegiality.'[630] Francis' emphasis on synodality describes the Church as a living communion bonded by the Spirit of Christ, shared discernment, participation, and mission. Synodality involves the entire church walking together on the 'same road' through conversation, listening to one another, and working collaboratively. Hence, in Uganda's context, the event of encounter helps to concretize the vision of synodality by creating communion among ecclesial communities and allowing different ethnic and linguistic groups to meet, converse, collaborate, and journey together starting with those on the margins. As I will explain below, the church should exhibit a living communion that gives a specific pastoral form to its profession of the one faith, one Lord, one hope, and one love. Such pastoral arrangement should enable the development of real human bonds between people of different geographic, linguistic, and cultural distinctions. Moreover, from a Catholic perspective, the eucharist as a sacrament of encounter with God demands a communion among those who share the one bread and cup as brothers and sisters – a communion that defines them as one family of God. Eucharistic faith constantly challenges disciples of Jesus to seek corresponding relationships in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of Uganda's society in such a way that they attend to the needs of the most vulnerable.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, this demand to attend to victims of oppression requires the people of God to create authentic human relations starting at the grassroots. As I will later elaborate on, Small Christian Communities at the village level constitute the majority of

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[630] Ormond Rush, "Inverting the Pyramid: The Sensus Fidelium in a Synodal Church," *Theological Studies* 78, no. 2 (2017): 304.

victims of oppression, particularly women and children. Small Christian Communities thus become the *loci* for the event of encounter that seeks to eradicate alienation, exclusion, and oppression. Interpersonal presence *with* victims at the grassroots is indispensable, insofar as it manifests God's transformative presence among them. I will advance the view that since women have been, in general terms more deeply affected by the oppressive conditions in Uganda they are the subjects to guide the process of reconciliation. In this sense, they can provide suitable leadership that seeks to overcome unjust social structures in a predominantly patriarchal society. Hence, effective forms of encounter at the grassroots can provide specific ways of living the incarnational mission of mercy.

Furthermore, events of encounter focused on the grassroots offer the church opportunities to be dialogical and participative [631] in the social, political, and economic affairs of society that affect the most vulnerable. In this sense, victims are not left to fend for themselves in the fight for justice. Rather, they stand in solidarity with all Christians and the entire society in pursuit of social transformation. Events of encounter constitute the *modus operandi* for all the baptized to participate in Christ's threefold ministry of priest, prophet, and king. *Lumen Gentium* upholds the shared dignity and equality of all baptized persons, despite differences in charisms and ministries by which every baptized participates in the prophetic, teaching, the priestly/sanctifying office, and the kingly/governing office.[632] This participation of the whole body of Christ in his threefold ministry involves the mission of creating unity among the baptized and bringing God's merciful presence to the most vulnerable, listening to their most pressing needs, discerning the direction to take, and walking with them toward liberation and salvation.

Pope Francis asserts that the presence of the Holy Spirit gives "Christians a certain

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[631] Ibid., 305.
[632] Ibid., 310.

connaturality with divine realities and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression."[633] This can imply that the people of God are inspired to create occasions and opportunities for exercising the different gifts of the Spirit in transforming the social, political, and economic realities. Creating such opportunities would generate events, practices, and processes that primarily seek to develop a relational pastoral culture in a society that is deeply fragmented. Put simply, the event of encounter provides opportunities and practical ways of drawing near to the most vulnerable, establishing communion with them, participating in their lives, while enabling them to become co-partners in the mission to eradicate the social evils that affect their lives.

The event of encounter lends itself to a more dynamic understanding of the church both *ad intra* and *ad extra.* It involves fostering a wider consciousness about the implications of ecclesial communion and the obligations it generates toward the transformation of the entire society. It seeks a common mission toward social reconciliation not only among people of the same faith, but across religious, sociopolitical, and ethnic differences. It helps to actualize the church's prophetic mission: to be the light of the world and salt of the earth. A prophetic mission challenges the people of God to be vigilant in discerning the signs of the times and devise appropriate action toward social transformation.[634]

This chapter has three sections. The first explains my understanding of *encounter*. I briefly explore its meaning, contextual use, precisely its relation to the incarnational mission of mercy, and some resources upon which the notion is founded. It also examines Pope Francis' take on the

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[633] Pope Francis, "Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World," 2013, no.119, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

[634] Elias Omondi Opongo, "Inventing Creative Approaches to Complex Systems of Injustice," in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 74.

'event of encounter' that emphasizes the reality of 'presence' with other human persons giving specific grounding to my approach.[635] Here it suffices to say that *encounter* stresses interhuman engagement that offers possibilities of creating reconciling identities and relations among human persons by which transforming initiatives, conversations, and collaborations can take place. Conversations consist of mutual listening and presence to one another. As I will later elaborate, *conversation* is etymologically and phenomenologically related to *conversion*, inasmuch as there is a turning toward the face of the other with the intention of listening, understanding, transformation, and journeying together. The second section discusses the significance of the *praxis of encounter* in response to the threefold problem chapter one raised. Here I elaborate on the importance of interpersonal encounters in nurturing transforming initiatives in the spiritual, anthropological, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and socioreligious realities of Uganda's society. In a sense, encounter offers a milieu that helps respond to the multifaceted problem of ethnic fragmentation. Section three proposes women's leadership, particularly at the grassroots. I propose that since women generally comprise the majority of victims as well as the backbone of the nuclear family in Uganda, they should provide a foundation of leadership structure in Small Christian Communities and beyond. Since the oppressive conditions are most evident at the grassroots, they should provide the primary *loci* where processes, events, and activities of reconciliation ought to begin. In making these proposals I am aware that no single human scheme is able to do justice to the complexities and subtleties that a process of social reconciliation requires. Nevertheless, this Christian praxis of encounter offers a localized approach that makes God's reconciling work present to the most vulnerable at the margins of Uganda's society. This approach in my view offers a distinct contribution to the diverse approaches and methods that have

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[635] John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfang, eds., *Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter*, Global Perspectives on New Evangelization (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), xv.

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been tried in the past and/or already in effect in Uganda.

However, the praxis of encounter differs from these approaches in that it invokes a new way of the church's pastoral involvement in social realities by merging Christian life with concrete social action. It precisely expresses the incarnational mission of mercy by which a Christian's faith experience becomes concretized by historical action. Hence, the event of encounter responds to the threefold question that guides this project: That is, it orients *who* the disciple of Jesus ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the 'other,' and *what* she ought to do to establish social relations and transform social structures. As the theologies of liberation insistently point out, "what Christians do is essential to what Christians are."[636] In this sense, encounter should offer the opportunity for human transformation in such a way that persons, communities, institutions, and the Church practically draw near to the *other* to engage in processes, activities, and events that help interpret conflicted reality. Encounter aims at fostering justice, solidarity, and hope for victims; engender forgiveness and conversion of perpetrators, and establish mutual trust, and cooperation with the ethnic other in ways that actualize the reconciling values of the Kingdom of God. The next section articulates how the event of encounter makes present such an incarnational mission of mercy.

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[636] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 119.

SECTION I: UNDERSTANDING ENCOUNTER AS A PRAXIS OF AN
    INCARNATIONAL MISSION OF MERCY

**5.1.1 Event of Encounter: Grounds for Conversation, Conversion, and
    Collaboration**

The foundation of the *event of encounter* is faith in a God who turns toward human beings

and is involved in their historical reality in order to transform it. In like manner, human persons

should make a similar turn toward one another to transform broken relationships through

conversation, dialogue, and collaboration. This implies that encounter should not only provide a

milieu for conversation, but also nurture conversion from negative attitudes, exclusion, and

oppression toward new ways of being and relation.

In fact, from an etymological point of view, *conversation* and *conversion* are interrelated

at the same Latin root. The Latin verb *verto, vertere, versi, versus* means to "turn." [637] Adding the

preposition '*con*' (with) to *versus* becomes *conversus* which means "to turn with…" or "to go in a

new direction with…" The noun form of the verb *conversus,* is *conversio,* or in English

"conversion." Thus, *conversion* literary means 'turning with' another toward a new direction. This

also implies 'interaction' with another, with some reference to physical presence.

Correspondingly, *conversus* is the root of another verb *converso,* (*conversare, conversavi,*

conversatus) which means to turn over in mind, to ponder. In its 'present passive form' *conversari*

means to live with, dwell, and keep company with. The noun form of the verb is, *conversatio,* that

is, 'conversation.' Both etymologically and phenomenologically, *conversation* and *conversion* are

intimately connected.[638] Moreover, from a historical perspective *conversation* originally meant the

act of living with, associating with, or being (literary, turning about) among others, from which it

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[637] Michael A. Cowan and Bernard J. Lee, SM, *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 3.
[638] Ibid., 3.

came to signify physical intimacy. Only in the seventeenth-century C.E. did *converse* come to mean to *talk* together. Then, conversation came to imply "communication and sharing … engaging [in] con-*versation* or turning one's face toward the face of the other."[639] Hence, conversation implies a communicative event of encounter[640] that anticipates the mutual transformation of the interlocutors toward a new direction.

That conversation and conversion are related is no superficial insight. The practical import presumes the physical presence of subjects involved in conversation, that is, sharing a common space, mutually listening, participating in each other's life in ways that nurture solidarity, collaboration, and journeying together. The very nature of conversation implies unity among subjects. Hans-Georg Gadamer is one of the contemporary thinkers who has developed a dynamic understanding of the 'art conversation.' Although this project does not engage the wide-ranging implications of Gadamer's hermeneutics of conversation, it only suffices to mention that Gadamer's notion of conversation has practical applications for the event of encounter in what he calls the "fusion of horizons." [641] He suggests that conversation consists in broadening one's perspective and merging of points of view of interlocutors in the understanding of reality. This implies that the ˙fusion of horizons' is a fruit of conversational encounters where the subject opens herself to comprehend the other's context. And as a result, there is a possibility of internalizing that context in ways that influence the subject's own prior view of reality. Hence, this engagement can genuinely challenge interlocutors and help them recognize the limited particularity of their own horizon.[642] Conversation helps one to expand her own parochial view of reality through

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[639] Andrzej Wierciński, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology; v. 2 (Berlin: Piscataway, NJ: Lit; Distribution in North America by Transaction Publishers, 2011), 19.
[640] Ibid., 23.
[641] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. / translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 385.
[642] Scherto Gill, "Holding Oneself Open in a Conversation – Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics and the Ethics

attentive listening to the other. For Gadamer, in human understanding, there is no horizon that is a closed-end. For him, understanding is open, continuous, and necessarily incomplete. In this regard, conversation should provide inter-subject openness to encounters, engagement, and listening to each other's context with the prospect of creating transformed relations. In this sense, conversation has practical importance, that is, it should comprise building friendships and fomenting unity among members of communities.[643] This presupposes that conversational encounters have the potential of orienting persons and communities toward a common direction. As mentioned above, the common goal of the praxis of encounter is the exercise of the incarnational mission of mercy, that is, entering into the reality of the most vulnerable in order to transform it.

5.1.2 Encounter as the Basic Form of Incarnational Mission of Mercy

To begin with, the event of encounter has a sacramental dimension; it manifests God as present to human persons in and through the condition of the most vulnerable. Chapter three demonstrated God's preferential predilection for the poor and closeness to them through fellow human persons. Again, as noted above, Matthew 25 affirms that encounter with the least of our sisters and brothers can provide a medium for encounter with God; a God who makes the divine transformative presence close to the reality of the victim. In this sense, encounter has a double effect, it both establishes God's closeness to vulnerable persons as well as mutual closeness of persons to each other. This mutual engagement offers subjects new insights into what it means to be human, helps assess the conditions of the vulnerable and provides reconciling orientation that engenders liberative action. Hence, the event of encounter as an ecclesial praxis seeks to establish

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of Dialogue," *Journal of Dialogue Studies* 3, no. 1 (May 15, 2015): 14.

[643] Cowan and Lee, SM, *Conversation, Risk, and Conversion: The Inner and Public Life of Small Christian Communities*, 2.

mutual experience of closeness, friendship, and participation in the life of persons and communities particularly at the grassroots in order to transform it. As noted above, this has significant implications for one's relation with God.

Moreover, in Jesus of Nazareth, the divine reality 'made history,' that is, God's encounter with human persons is no longer a remote aspiration but a transformative communion with God who is among us, particularly in and through each other. The gospels attest to the fact that Jesus' *'modus operandi'* was his physical presence to people in different conditions, especially the poor. He often stretched out his hand touched, healed, and transformed their lives.[644] Encountering human persons was a singular characteristic of Jesus' life and mission. This implies that the mission of Jesus' disciples stands on their ability to exemplify the life Jesus practiced by encountering fellow humans in ways that are transformative, liberative, and salvific. Following Jesus' personal mission that was characterized by encountering persons, in like manner social reconciliation should have a dimension of personal physical presence to the other, conversing and collaborating with her for the betterment of her life and that of society. As mentioned above, Christian practice requires the merging of faith and practice. Christian belief in the God of mercy who (in the person of Jesus) touched, healed, and fed the poor requires us to take a similar turn toward victims of history.

In sum, the event of the encounter provides the milieu for personal and communal presence with one another so that transformative conversations and interactions may take place. Conversation offers opportunities for mutual listening, turning toward one another, generating dialogical and collaborative activities, events, practices, and structures among regional, diocesan,

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[644] Mary Madeline Todd, "Embodied Mercy," in *Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter*, ed. John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfang, Global Perspectives on New Evangelization (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 26.

parish, and Small Christian communities. Most importantly, the task of reconciliation is guided by the Holy Spirit who nurtures the gift of faith among the faithful toward ongoing conversion and transformation. The Spirit's presence particularly undergirds the Spirit's gift of *sensus fidei* that nurtures the people of God in the provisional task of reconciliation by discerning the signs of the times and creating practices for personal and social transformation. The next section demonstrates how the event of encounter actualizes the incarnational mission of mercy in response to the multifaceted problems wrought by ethnic exclusion, alienation, and oppression.

SECTION II: THE EVENT OF ENCOUNTER IN RESPONSE TO ETHNIC FRAGMENTATION: PROCESSES, PROGRAMS, AND EVENTS

In this section, I advance the view that the event of encounter is a holistic approach to the incarnational mission of mercy with different modalities. It provides a matrix of different aspects of social reconciliation including processes, activities, and events. These interrelated aspects should link different dimensions of life, that is, the spiritual, anthropological, sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and interreligious relations that constitute an organic human experience. I also point out that although the church has limitations in effecting all these aspects of reconciliation, it has the prophetic duty to challenge, initiate, and mobilize other sectors of society. Moreover, establishing an archetype of reconciliation within the church's pastoral structure has the potential of inspiring social action. Society itself has a lot of talent and expertise to offer to the church in learning to do reconciliation. This proposal aims at inspiring a mutual relationship between church and society toward human and structural transformation. In the following six sections I articulate how the event of encounter seeks a holistic transformation of the different dimensions of human experience. For each dimension, I suggest specific activities, programs, and processes that may nurture the incarnational mission of mercy.

5.2.1 Spiritual and Pastoral Dimensions of the Event of Encounter

The spiritual dimension of encounter comprises four interrelated aspects; its centrality in eucharistic faith, implications for the unity of the ecclesial body of Christ, the potential of its transformative influence toward unity, and the significance of unity in fostering a reconciling society. I emphasize that the centrality of eucharistic faith is the ground for the church's mission of reconciliation as I elaborate below.

To begin with, Christian faith affirms the celebration of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of the living presence of Christ and the summit of unity of his body – the people of God. The Eucharist is both a sacrament of encounter with God and encounter with one another. As a corollary, concretely living eucharistic faith hinges on the unity of the body of Christ in its members. The spiritual nourishment presupposes a corresponding expression in historical reality. In other words, the eucharist as the most intimate encounter with God who becomes one in us, evokes a similar turn among the members of Christ's body toward each other. Hence, the eucharistic faith affirms membership in the one body of Christ both sacramentally and existentially.[645] In this sense, it demands a 'turning with' each other, or in a manner of speaking, a 'conversion' and 'conversation' with each other in a new direction toward unity and reconciliation. With regard to Uganda's context, those who share the one bread and one cup should necessarily foster communion among them regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, social class, or otherwise. All parochial enclaves that insulate members of the one body of Christ from each other contradict the existential dimension of the eucharistic faith and its eschatological implications.

Theologian Victor Codina, SJ asserts that the theology of liberation not only affirms the Eucharist as the reality of presence, sacrifice, and sacramental communion, it also deepens the

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[645] Ibid., 33.

understanding of unity among the people of God centered on human presence to one another. He argues that "the primary symbol is the fellowship of sharing a meal and cup."[646] Codina notes that in the gospels, meals and banquets anticipate communion in the eschatological Kingdom of God (Mt 8:11, 22:1-4). He interprets the multiplication of loaves for the hungry and other actions of Jesus for instance, eating with sinners and marginalized people (Mark 2:16, Luke 15:2, Matthew 11:19) as symbols of fellowship in God's Kingdom. For Codina, the Last Supper was the epitome of these meals/banquets that anticipated ultimate communion in the heavenly Kingdom. This means that in the eucharist we not only commune with Christ but also with each other as we anticipate the fulfillment of that communion in God's Kingdom. Thus, the Eucharist is inseparable from fellowship with God and with each other.[647] The understanding of the eucharist as an event of encounter with God and with one another, establishes a fundamental relationship with what we consume, who we are, and how we ought to act in historical reality. Therefore, as a sacrament of encounter and unity, the eucharist challenges disunity within the body of Christ.

Because the eucharist anticipates unity of the body of Christ, this unity should evoke real engagement with the lives of others starting with the least of Jesus' sisters and brothers. Moreover, encountering the most vulnerable should challenge the tendency to espouse abstract forms of spirituality by which Christians may try to evade the task of looking victims in the eye and attend to the real issues that affect their daily lives. The event of encounter should awaken the conscience of a disciple to where the body of Christ is most wounded and what is required for its healing. A Christian's presence with real persons opens opportunities to her to bring the healing touch of God's merciful love to victims, while at the same time she encounters Jesus in those conditions

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[646] Victor Codina, "Sacraments," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 227.
[647] Ibid., 228.

where Jesus said he would be found. In a sense, one may not claim an encounter with God, without seeking unity with the least of human persons. Encounter seeks to express an existential dimension of faith in Jesus and unity in his body.

Furthermore, the event of encounter is imbued with a transforming power of conversion insofar as it offers subjects opportunities of turning toward the face of the other. This involves accepting to engage the context of the other. In encountering the other the subject may be drawn to open herself to the challenging experience of facing and addressing the concerns of the other. This engagement anticipates mutual listening and dialogue with the potential of eventually walking together toward reconciliation. Mutual engagement anticipates a level of openness to the other by which interlocutors may be mutually transformed by that experience.[648] Such occasions can create significant changes in the way the subject perceives the other and in relation to oneself.[649] By drawing closer to the other one may begin to understand more fully the complexities of the other, his or her needs, motivations, fears, and desires. Within the context of these renewed relations, one may begin to see the other in new positive ways with the possibility of establishing transformed relations. In this sense, that encounter may cause mutual conversion, precisely because it challenges the way one thinks and acts toward the other. In order for such encounters to unleash their transformative potential, ecclesial communities should be open to exhibit a social harmony that approximates a fully functioning body of Christ, manifested in the unity of persons and community. In Uganda's context, events of encounter are not inconsequential.

Second Vatican decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad gentes divinitus*) echoes this idea: "Just as Christ penetrated people's hearts and by a truly human dialogue led them to the

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[648] Andrzej Wierciński, "The Primacy of Conversation in Philosophical Hermeneutics," in *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation*, ed. Andrzej Wierciński, vol. 2, International Studies in Hermeneutics and Phenomenology (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 23.
[649] Ibid., 20.

divine light, so too his disciples, profoundly pervaded by the Spirit of Christ, should know to converse with those among whom they live, that through sincere and patient dialogue they themselves might learn of those riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations" (*AGD* no. 11). I envision this mutual engagement to be demonstrated in the transformation of the political, economic, social, and other realities of human experience.

Lastly, deriving from the implications of eucharistic unity, conversational encounters have the potential of establishing reconciling communities. As mentioned above, I am under no illusion that simply bringing people together will automatically create an environment for unity. Rather, the events of encounter should be established through nonconfrontational approaches. Participants should be inspired to discover that they belong to each other, not in some mysterious way, but in real tangible ways and experiences of closeness as they all search for meaning and true human flourishing. Moreover, they may learn to understand each other not as detached, alienated, and atomized *other*, but as companions on a shared journey with common goals, aspirations, and dreams. In conversational encounters subjects may begin to discover their mutual interdependence and that no one lives for oneself only (cf Romans 14:7-9).

I propose that the Church should provide events, processes, and opportunities to address the problem of ethnic fragmentation. Here I suggest mutual *spiritual adoption* of dioceses, parishes, sub-parishes, and Small Christian Communities. By 'spiritual adoption' I imply making pastoral initiatives that form sister churches in order to make concrete the spiritual kinship that exists among different faith communities separated by linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, or geographic boundaries. Spiritual adoption should merge faith and experience in pastoral arrangements that allow persons and ecclesial communities to establish real human contact with one another across different ethnic regions.

As mentioned above, church members are not exempt from promoting ethnically charged

rhetoric, attitudes, and divisive actions toward members of other ethnic groups. Insofar as persons, institutions, and groups engage in negative attitudes and representations that significantly increase the likelihood of demeaning, resenting, and tainting the identity of persons of other ethnic groups, they contribute to actions of exclusion, oppression, and violence.[650] This is to say, any person or entity that participates in the *production* of a climate of bias and prejudice contributes to a joint venture of negative ethnic ideology that divides and harms the body of Christ.

The Church institution in Uganda should promote what Jon Sobrino calls, "converted intelligence"[651] that unveils and acknowledges the presence of ethnically entrenched causes of hatred in Uganda's historical reality and endeavors to transform it. Hence, the confrontation of all aspects of negative ethnic ideology in their diverse manifestations requires establishing a positive pastoral praxis of encounter. The events that reinforce spiritual adoption between ecclesial communities should take place at all levels of society, from the diocesan level to the Small Christian Communities at the grassroots. By establishing a culture of ecclesial communion within the church, sincere mutual respect and trust may begin to emerge. In this way, the church can gradually and eventually become the pioneer in eradicating the problem of ethnic fragmentation in Uganda's society.

In sum, eucharistic faith that engenders conversational encounters can create unity in the body of Christ. This unity has a transforming power that discloses the mystery of who we truly are as members of each other while affirming what it means to be truly human. As chapter three argued, being in the world requires a recognition that we are relational beings – a characteristic that is at the core of being a human person. In this sense, we are capable of giving ourselves in

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[650] Virginia Held, "Group Responsibility for Ethnic Conflict," *The Journal of Ethics* 6, no. 2 (2002): 169, accessed May 5, 2021, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115723.

[651] Sobrino, *Where Is God?*, xx.

relation to others.[652] That relationship is constituted by transforming encounters, relations, and mutual collaboration. In this sense, to live in community means, being in conversation and constantly turning toward one another. This eventually inspires conversion toward a more humane and reconciling society.

5.2.2 Anthropological and Sociological Dimension of Encounter

The second implication of the event of encounter is both anthropological and sociological; it has the potential of humanizing persons and creating mutually beneficial social relations. In chapter three I emphasized that positive encounters reinforce humanizing interrelations at two levels, among human persons and communities. In this regard, conversational encounters nurture an existential dimension of physical presence that fosters sharing a common space, with the potential of generating new identities and meaning about oneself in relation to the *other*. [653]

To begin with, I highlight what scholars have developed as *contact theory.* Contact theory is a long-established mode of attitude change. One of the central findings of *contact theory* is that segregation or infrequent contact between persons and groups reinforces the continuation of negative stereotypes, mutual ignorance, fear, and resentment. [654] Hence, the essential idea of contact theory is that increased exposure to the other, under positive conditions gives each party the opportunity to farther knowledge of the other. This creates the possibility of adjusting the subject's attitudes for the better. In order for interactions to be more effective in debunking negative stereotypes and improving human relation, persons and groups must strive to have equal status, common goals, and support from authority structures toward mutual cooperation. Through

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[652] Jennifer Bader, "The Philosopher-Pope: The Theological Anthropology of John Paul II," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology*, ed. Mary Ann Hindsdale and Stephen Okey (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 273.
[653] A. E. Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011), 2.
[654] Wilke, Davis, and Chivvis, "Establishing Social Conditions of Trust and Cooperation," 199.

positive contacts ingroups and outgroups may establish affective ties, which in turn may help them reassess the negative stereotypes they have hitherto held. Frequent positive encounters may create opportunities to establish supportive social relations. Contact can be direct, through physical interaction with persons of other groups or indirect through secondary channels such as representatives, organizations or communication through media. These forms of contact may positively affect outgroup attitudes, reduce prejudice, and enhance intergroup trust. Ultimately, positive encounters may offer the subject opportunities to establish friendships with the other.

Moreover, conversational encounters are inter-subject interactions defined by self-disclosure to the other. As theologian Sandra Schneiders states "the most radical form of entering into and receiving another is achieved in true communication."[655] She argues that although the subject comes to know the other through language, she actually communicates her interiority. For Schneiders, through conversation "a person chooses to invite another into his or her interiority."[656] She interprets divine revelation as a communication of Godself that engenders mutual acceptance of subjects, that is, God and the human person. In the communication of self, subjects experience personal disclosure that gives rise to mutual treasuring of the other and foments a shared life characterized by irrevocable commitment to each other. In other words, this kind of self-revelation is "mutual self-gift expressive of and terminating in love."[657] At inter-human level, conversational encounters demonstrate anthropological aspects of mutuality and reciprocity. There is a mutual sharing of life between the subjects. Therefore, conversational encounters, that is, 'turning toward the other' not only imply talking, listening, and dialoguing, but also nurture self-disclosure and inner transformation of subjects.

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[655] Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville MN: Michael Glazier, 1999), 34.
[656] Ibid., 38.
[657] Ibid., 34.

From a sociological point of view, merely putting people together is by no means sufficient to create positive relations. Indeed, exposure or contact under unsuitable conditions may even worsen the already tense relations rather than encourage friendship, mutuality, and reciprocity. Contact should aim at promoting positive social interactions by enhancing communication and collaboration between persons and groups toward a common vision and goals. As chapter two noted, educating persons and groups about the importance of mutual engagement toward common goals is a crucial component to improving intergroup attitudes toward one another, and promoting intergroup cooperation, cohesion, and relation.[658]

The form of contact I emphasize here is one that creates harmony engendered by conversational encounters. Theologian Orobator Agbonkhianmeghe underscores a similar point in his reference to the African palaver. He points out that the art of conversation within the context of 'African palaver' offers an environment for listening to contrasting views of the different interlocutors. [659] He states that "this praxis [of conversation] creates a shared intellectual space allowing interlocutors to expand their horizons of understanding and relation to God, faith and the community called church."[660] In conversation there is a mutual recognition of the humanity of the other as well as the significance of their contribution to the overall direction of society. In manner of speaking, creating the space for mutual engagement and presence in conversation has the potential of rehumanizing the other and establishing positive relations.

For Hans-Georg Gadamer, "to reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were."[661] Gadamer states that

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[658] Wilke, Davis, and Chivvis, "Establishing Social Conditions of Trust and Cooperation," 202.
[659] Orobator, *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, 3.
[660] Ibid., 5.
[661] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 385.

"we as human beings have to learn from each other." And again that, "we do not need just to hear one another but to *listen* [emphasis added] to one another."[662] For him, being able to enter in a conversation with the other is the essential characteristic of being a human person. The transformation that might ensue from these engagements presupposes some form of human contact.

5.2.3 Sociopolitical Significance of Encounter

The third dimension of the event of encounter is its sociopolitical significance. Chapter one demonstrated that in Uganda ethnic identity was coopted into sociopolitical and economic realities with intense competition, division, and hostility. To end ethnic fragmentation that has wrought exclusion, alienation, and oppression while it still threatens the lives of the majority of people requires a willingness to engage in political dialogue. Here, dialogue requires more focused discussions about sociopolitical issues, precisely because these issues are often framed in terms of ethnic identity. As political scientist Charles Villa-Vicencio puts it, "the obvious ingredients of this process (of dialogue) include the simple but crucial categories of engaging the other, ways of talking and listening, imagination, and action."[663] Contact with persons of other groups to engage them in matters of common political importance particularly the effects of the legacy of ethnic alienation is crucial to altering the negative political history of Uganda.

Such conversational encounters can help lessen exclusive ethnic enclaves that reinforce ignorance and people's narrow views of self-understanding in relation to the *other*, that undergird political and economic exclusion. As noted above, although the Church has limited influence in the sociopolitical space, nevertheless, it should be bold in presenting Christian values that promote

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[662] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Gadamer in Conversation: Reflections and Commentary*, ed. Carsten Dutt, trans. Richard E. Palmer, Yale Studies in Hermeneutics (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 39.
[663] Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 64.

human flourishing in society. However, the church does not impose its religious convictions on society but rather brings these values such as justice and solidarity with the poor in order to eradicate the manipulative tendencies of patronage and internal ethnic divisions[664] along ethnic lines. The church should also be open to sociopolitical conversations that encourage openness, friendship, and mutual acceptance. Truthfulness, reciprocity, trust, and goodwill may begin to emerge from genuine conversations and encounters.

Furthermore, such encounters may inspire and shape approaches to administering justice. Reconciling justice should aim at attending to the needs of victims and uniting people. As chapter two argued, justice should seek right relations, reconcile differences as well addressing the past legacy of oppression. It has to be noted that the church's prophetic challenge to the military and government officials against oppression and injustice might come at a cost. Nevertheless, the persistent demand for justice might gradually yield the willingness to hold political conversations. Reconciling justice should also aim at healing wounds through the discovery of truth, fostering reparations, economic empowerment, healthcare, and education opportunities starkly lacking among the most vulnerable. These aspects however, require collective efforts by all sectors of civil society and government. From a Christian perspective these processes might eventually foster forgiveness and love for one another.[665] Hence, transforming justice in the sociopolitical order has a direct relation to meeting the needs of victims.[666]

I should note again that, although the church is limited in its efforts where political will is

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[664] Henni Alava and Jimmy Spire Ssentongo, "Religious (de)Politicisation in Uganda's 2016 Elections," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 677, accessed July 14, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2016.1270043.

[665] Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Walk with Us and Listen: Political Reconciliation in Africa* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), x.

[666] Jennifer Kryszak, "From Encounter to Justice: Pope Francis, Catholic Sisters, and the Culture of Encounter," in *Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter*, ed. John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfang, Global Perspectives on New Evangelization (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 48.

lacking, these events may create new opportunities within civil society to readdress atrocities, foster accountability of perpetrators, embolden public involvement, acknowledge grievances (even if symbolically for instance to establish a National day for victims or building memorials), evoke commitment to the rule of law, and develop national forums that encourage ethnic interactions and activities.[667] While this project does not offer a specific model on how political events and processes should be carried out, it provides a general framework of ecclesial engagement in encouraging events of encounter by which conversations and collaborations may take place in a spirit of listening to one another, and walking together in order that the chains of injustice must be broken.[668]

In sum, sociopolitical encounters should enable subjects share a vision and life marked by acceptance and respect which are hallmarks of a fully functioning society. Sociopolitical encounters should endeavor to cultivate justice, and values of friendship, solidarity, tolerance, and mutual co-existence. Despite the difficulties that might be encountered particularly from the accumulated histories and memories of exclusion, oppression, and alienation conversational encounters have the capacity to generate new forms of conversation and collaboration. The value of human interdependence undergirded by relationality should shape sociopolitical and economic reality.

5.2.4 Socioeconomic Aspect of Encounter

As already demonstrated, ethnic exclusion has severe socioeconomic disadvantage for the majority of people. It particularly targets persons and groups considered outsiders or rivals to the

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[667] Simon Keyes, "Mapping on Approaches to Reconciliation" (The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, March 2019), 8.

[668] Anne Arabome, "'Woman, You Are Set Free!' Women and Discipleship in the Church," in *Reconciliation, Peace, and Justice: The Second African Synod*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 121.

ruling ethnic elite. The Church's teaching about preferential option for the poor should take immediate and concrete action to respond the needs of most vulnerable particularly at the grassroots. As section three will demonstrate, the majority of victims live in countryside where there is little or no infrastructures for healthcare, good schools, economic and employment opportunities or the means to afford decent human living. The Church's far reaching collective effectiveness in the all parts of the country provides a latent force to fight for justice and support integral human development. Moreover, the church has access to media (Catholic TV and Radio), school systems, organizations, programs among other channels that can educate people about the available opportunities for socioeconomic development mainly through *Caritas Uganda* and Catholic Relief Services.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* affirms the Church's ability to play a leading role in these developments. It notes several contributions the Church in Africa can offer to society for instance, education, healthcare, media, defense of human rights and human dignity, outreach in offering relief and protection of the persecuted.[669] While the integral understanding of salvation includes all dimensions of the human person, the church has to maintain a delicate balance in seeking a just and humane society. This means that the church should maintain her prophetic role in seeking socio-economic and political justice for the most vulnerable. As theologian Emmanuel Katongole affirms, "the Church's primary role is to be a constant reminder of the story of new creation made possible by God's reconciliation"[670] with humanity. Hence, the Church as 'light of

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[669] Pope Benedict XVI, "Africae Munus: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace" (Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS), November 19, 2011), no.30, accessed July 21, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html.

[670] Emmanuel Katongole, "Apostolic Exhortation, 'Africae Munus:' The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace," in *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen, vol. 16, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), 77.

the world and salt of the earth' should constantly challenge society to live justly.[671] In this sense, the Church may become recognized as a sacrament of God's reconciling presence that constantly requires ongoing witness.[672]

5.2.5 The Sociocultural Aspect: Mutual Acceptance of Diversity

The fourth dimension of the event of encounter is in its sociocultural dimension. This aspect is very crucial for Uganda's reconciliation process. As chapter one demonstrated sociopolitical, economic, and religious relations are apparently framed in ethnic/culture identities. It is within these identities that negative attitudes and exclusionary arrangements are formed and perpetuated.

Cultural/ethnic leaders are symbols of ethnic identity, meaning, expression, and unity. They hold sway over the identity of persons and communities in their particular ethnic groups. Although these leaders have contributed to peace processes in past conflicts, they have only been used by the new political regimes for "burying the past and moving on."[673] However, their influence in shaping sustained harmonious relationship among ethnic groups is lacking, downplayed or simply absent. Involvement of these leaders in the reconciliation process should take a sustained and active presence. This would involve collaboration with other sectors of society to establish events of encounter, conversations, and collaborations among different ethnic groups

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[671] Benedict XVI, "Africae Munus: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace," no.23.

[672] Katongole, "Apostolic Exhortation, 'Africae Munus:' The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace," 78.

[673] Susanne Buckley-Zistel, *Conflict Transformation and Social Change in Uganda: Remembering after Violence* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 141. Political scientist Susanne Buckley-Zistel who has studied conflicts and their transformation in Africa particularly in Uganda notes that in contrast to Western mechanisms of reconciliation that focus on 'problem-solving,' traditional African reconciliation initiatives often seek 'closure.' This is often symbolized in rituals like 'bending the spears, killing oxen, or cleansing or re-initiation. In some instances, seeking closure however, has fallen prey to political manipulation by new regimes that find it politically expedient to bury past crimes.

in order to maintain mutual acceptance and building of relationships. I suggest that cultural leaders take a leading role in creating 'cultural' encounters between themselves in symbolic ways and among different ethnic groups. These events may involve annual visits, ceremonies, establishing language and cultural centers that encourage acquiring knowledge about other ethnic cultures including their languages, customs, and norms. In addition, each native nation can annually establish days to celebrate cultural diversity that recognizes and honors each other's cultural heritage. Furthermore, there should be cultural exchange programs between different native nations that symbolize ethnic and cultural unity. While these suggestions are beyond the scope of this project, they demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the event of encounter, and that reconciliation requires comprehensive and robust approaches at all levels of society. Moreover, the church's leading role can inspire such events and processes. The next section shows how the event of encounter should foster interreligious and ecumenical relations.

5.2.6 The Ecumenical and Interreligious Dimension of Encounter

To begin with, divided Christian traditions are a scandal to society, since *de facto* they contradict the will of the Divine Master.[674] The effectiveness of the reconciling message of the gospel hinges on the actual practices of witness to Christian unity among those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. While the religious wars among Christians are things of the past, there still remains some residual resentment among Christian churches. For the most part many Christian denominations have maintained their parochial enclaves with little significant collaboration with each other. Nevertheless, the Uganda ecumenical movement under the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) has made notable progress in uniting Christians particularly on matters of social

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[674] Benedict XVI, "Africae Munus: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace," no.89.

justice.[675] UJCC focuses on building consensus among its member churches on issues of common concern for instance, "conflict transformation, mediation and negotiation, democracy and good governance, economic, gender and social rights, healthcare and education, capacity building with other civil society organizations, advocacy, and communication.[676] Church leaders have achieved some positive results in the past particularly in ending the civil war in northern Uganda. Cultural and religious leaders particularly Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu, were involved in negotiations between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army to end the war.

UJCC also collaborates with different non-government organizations (NGOs) and forums in order to advocate for victims of conflict and their families. For instance, UJCC works with Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), Caritas Uganda, Community Network for Social Justice (CNSJ), Christian Counselling Fellowship (CCF), Grassroot Reconciliation Group, Jesuit Refugee Services, Women Peace Initiative (WOPI), Invisible Children, including health organizations and facilities among others.[677] The activities of the ecumenical movement have often become evident during times of crises. In addition, many of the programs have remained under the supervision of top leadership at the national or regional level. Sustained efforts toward social reconciliation and corresponding structures at the grassroots are lacking. I propose that the effectiveness of the ecumenical movement initiatives lies in its ability to sustain its activities at grassroots and establishing corresponding leadership structures among the most vulnerable. This requires creating events, processes, and programs at grassroots that respond to persistent issues of injustice.

In addition, the Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU) established in 2001 comprises all

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[675] "UJCC – Uganda Joint Christian Council," n.d., accessed May 12, 2021, https://ujcc.co.ug/.

[676] "Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)," *IANSA*, accessed March 18, 2022, https://iansa.org/member/uganda-joint-christian-council-ujcc/.

[677] "Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)," *Peace Insight*, accessed May 12, 2021, https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/ujcc/.

faith traditions. This forum fosters mutual understanding and collaboration among all religious traditions in the country. It reflects much of the work of UJCC in addressing and uniting "efforts of religious institutions to jointly address issues of common concern."[678] Its mission is to promote peace, reconciliation, good governance, and holistic human development through interfaith action and collaboration, advocating for the empowerment of member bodies for the common good."[679] Nevertheless, there is little link between the programs and activities of this forum at the national level and the grassroots where they are most urgently needed. It is important that victims mainly at the grassroots become agents of liberation and reconciliation.

Furthermore, events of encounter should not only aim at helping victims transform their lives, but also provide a unifying factor for all persons and communities of different religious traditions. Uniting the grassroots and top echelons of leadership has the potential of linking different social groups, that is, the elite, middle classes, and the poor. Moreover, these connections are beneficial to various age groups like children, youth, and adults; different social sectors for instance, professionals, employers, and employees in walking together as a reconciling society.

It is essential to increase awareness, that is, grasping Uganda's historical, cultural, and socioeconomic reality. This involves educating people at different levels for instance, by introducing courses on reconciliation in school curricula. Schools, institutions, and universities need to incorporate cultural exchange programs across the nation in order to promote knowledge and encounter among persons and groups of different ethnic backgrounds. These processes might eventually promote positive knowledge and mutual acceptance in the entire society. As Sobrino states, "everyone cannot do everything equally, but no one may sit idly by either."[680] Hence, every

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[678] Admin, "Inter-Religious Council of Uganda – IRCU," n.d., accessed March 18, 2022, https://ircu.or.ug/.
[679] Ibid.
[680] Sobrino, *The Church and the Poor*, 298.

citizen, organization, and institution has a role to play in the processes of transforming the sociopolitical, economic, and historical reality into one that approximates a just society, regardless of the difficulties involved along that path.

In sum, the church should become a harbinger and witness to God's reconciling presence. It should actualize the life, mission, and activity of Jesus insofar as it transforms the lives of victims of history and fosters communion. This precisely means that the church's task is to form pastoral arrangements to invite other sectors of society to transform the condition of victims, form solidarity with them, and lead a compassionate mission. It should foster justice, advocacy, integral human development and empowerment, while at the same time confronting structures of oppression and injustice. The call to be honest, faithful, and being carried by the more of reality by God's grace helps us to take seriously the eschatological present. This is not an abstract goal rather a concrete realization of God's reign in Uganda's conflicted historical reality.

The values of God's Kingdom should inform and give direction to the Church's approach to the concerns of historical reality. People of faith should always remain open to the promptings of the Spirit in being mindful of an eschatological proviso. Although no human project corresponds to God's reign, the eschatological vision should give direction to the reconciling process that begins with unity among believers. *Gaudium et Spes* affirms that "although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society" (cf *GS 39*). As such the praxis of encounter among Christians and persons of other religious traditions should offer practical ways for a better ordering of society. In this way the Church's mission in social reconciliation is to be a beacon of light that invites and unites others. This mission requires a multifaceted approach that includes all aspects of human experience and flouring. In order to foster the different aspects mentioned above, the third section proposes a

practice of collaborative leadership at the grassroots.

SECTION III: ENCOUNTER AND WOMEN COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

5.3.1 Women Leadership and the Event of Encounter

In this section I propose the view that women leadership is critical to fostering events, activities, and process of encounter at different levels of church and society. Most scholars agree that there is need to raise collective consciousness with regard to equality and leadership potential of women in the church and society. According to Sister Maria Riley, in a predominantly patriarchal society, this involves helping women become "aware of themselves as subjects and shapers of history in politics, economic, culture, social institutions, and faith,"[681] rather than being exclusively relegated to domestic roles to which they have been socially confined. My view is based on four foundations: Recent teaching on the role of women in the catholic church particularly Pope Francis' Motu Proprio, *Spiritus Domini*[682] and encyclical, *Evangelium Gaudium;* the relation that ought to exist between the marginalized and power structures, that is, the need to empower victims; the nature of ecclesial structure in the East Africa with its close link to the nuclear family; and the increased number of educated and skilled women in the professional fields.

First, Pope Francis's Motu Proprio that modifies canon 230§1 regarding access of women to the ministries of lector and acolyte offers some new hope toward inclusive church structure. This modification is not inconsequential; it provides for the admission of women, on a stable basis to liturgical ministries previous reserved for men. This adds to previous papal apostolic exhortations that affirm the inclusion of women in ecclesial leadership and decision-making processes. For instance, in *Evangelium Gaudium* Pope Francis states that "we need to create still

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[681] Sister Maria Riley, O.P, "Women's Changing Consciousness - Changing Roles: The Challenge They Bring," *American Theological Library Association* (2016): 282.

[682] "Apostolic Letter in the Form of Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini, Modifying Canon 230 §1 of the Code of Canon Law Regarding Access of Women to the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte (10 January 2021) | Francis," accessed June 21, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210110_spiritus-domini.html.

broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church…" (*EG* # 103). Pope Francis' call is in line with the writings of some of his predecessors affirming the same idea. In *Christifideles Laici* (no. 51) John Paul II speaks about making more room for women in the church in the decision-making processes. Although the popes emphasize women's 'presence' and 'room in decision-making processes,' they do not articulate with any specificity how this should take place. The Code of Canon Law also includes provisions on the participation of women in the life and mission of the Church as full members of the Christian faithful called to participate in Christ's threefold ministry of priest, prophet, and king (canon 204). Again, it mentions the participation of women in diocesan and parish pastoral councils, curias as well as diocesan synods and particular councils (cf. canons 512 §1, 363§2, 766, 830§1). These seeds of inclusivity need to be expanded to offer a holistic edification of the church and proclamation of the Gospel. It is evident, however, that there is still much work to be done in the Catholic church associated with women's participation.

While the church affirms that women may discharge ecclesial duties in decision-making positions, in Uganda there is still a gap between what the official documents state and the pastoral practice. The call of popes to include women in leadership structures of the church requires a robust pastoral practice that helps change deep-rooted attitudes that tend to resist women's inclusion. As theologian Joseé Ngalula acknowledges that "to see women acting with authority where they had been absent through the centuries changes the traditionally rooted 'anthropology' in the unconscious of the majority of Catholics."[683] She implies that leadership responsibilities that include women should help to change the 'traditionally' held platitudes about the role of women

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[683] Joseé Ngalula, "Milestones in Achieving a More Inclusive Feminine Present in the Church of Pope Francis," in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 37.

in the church. Although these attitudes have slowly evolved over the decades in the East African region, a lot still needs to be done to improve a more inclusive leadership structure in the church. Currently, there is a significant presence of women leaders at diocesan, parish, sub-parish, and Small Christian Community (SCC) councils where the emphasis is placed on the skills, expertise, and competence of a leader rather than one's gender. In line with Ngalula, women's leadership in Small Christian communities would embolden and enliven the untapped talent that remains dormant in the church. In the recent past, Pope Francis elected Sister Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ as the first woman Under-Secretary in the Synod of Bishops. This example should inspire a more inclusive leadership structure of the church in Uganda.

Second, as mentioned above, for the incarnation mission of mercy to take effect, it should start with empowering the most vulnerable at the margins the majority of whom are women. People living at the grassroots bear the brunt of injustice, while their voices remain muted in national conversations. The pattern of Uganda's past civil wars has gravely affected the poor in rural areas. As a result, the margins are the most ravaged by poverty, disease, lack of good schools, health facilities, disease, sanitation, health care, human trafficking, hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of care for the elderly and orphans, economic development, refugee crises, and unemployment. Moreover, families fall under women's guardianship as mothers and wives, and caretakers of their elderly parents. Since the early 1990s studies have shown a rise in the proportion of households headed or principally maintained by women.[684] Creating links between families and SCCs is important to form networks of solidarity in communities, rather than leaving solitary

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[684] Cynthia B. Lloyd and Anastasia J. Gage-Brandon, "Women's Role in Maintaining Households: Family Welfare and Sexual Inequality in Ghana," *Population Studies* 47, no. 1 (1993): 115, accessed May 3, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2175229. *See also,* Folbre, Nancy. "Woman on Their Own: Global Patterns of Female Headship." In *The Women and International Development Annual*, edited by Rita S. Gallin and Anne Ferguson, 1st ed., 2:89–128. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1995; Dwyer, Daisy Hilse, and Judith Bruce. *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*. Population Council. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.

families to fend for themselves. These networks can provide an environment of solidarity, conversations, and collaboration and the possibility of "being on the road together"[685] toward justice and reconciliation. More precisely, linking nuclear families to SCCs expresses the main theme of the African Synod *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995)*,* which envisioned 'the Church as Family of God.'

People at the margins constitute a latent reservoir of untapped talent and energy for social transformation. Additionally, women are the backbone of the families; they bear the brunt of caring, nurturing, and sustaining their families on a daily basis. Hence, it follows that they should be offered the opportunity to access larger networks of relations that empower them to transform not only their families but society as well. This, however, does not mean that male presence in these structures should be ignored; rather, emboldening women's presence and leadership has the potential to significantly eradicate injustice and enhance the process of social transformation. It is important to transform ecclesial/social consciousness about women's roles, that is, to see women not merely as victims of historical forces though this remains true, but as significant contributors to the social, economic, civil, religious, and cultural transformation of the country. In order to develop an inclusive leadership structure in church and society, women need opportunities to be makers and transformers of history. The nature of Small Christian Communities provides a primary *locus* where leadership should principally be exercised.

Third, within the pastoral structure of the church in Uganda, *Small Christian Communities* (SCCs) offer a setting for women's leadership. The phrase *Small Christian Community* refers to the most basic ecclesial unit at the village, town, or even professional level consisting of a few families or dozen people within close proximity and/or sharing a similar social condition/status.

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[685] Éamonn Fitzgibbon, "Together on the Way - Pope Francis and Synodality," *The Furrow* 68, no. 10 (2017): 533, accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44738620.

The demographic composition of Small Christian Communities particularly in rural areas comprises the majority of the poor, most of whom are women and children. At the grassroots, women's activities and presence hold sway over the overall functioning of families, villages, and Small Christian Communities.

Historically, the chief architect of SCCs in Africa was Patrick Kalilombe, a theologian and bishop of Lilongwe in Malawi. He and other bishops realized that many of the church structures brought by Western missionaries were largely unrelated to the African condition. Kalilombe recognized that these imported structures hardly served the daily needs of the people.[686] As a result, the *Small Christian Community* structure was developed to fit an African ecclesiology that sought to form seamless links between the larger ecclesial body and the nuclear family.

As envisioned by the pioneers, a Small Christian Community would create ties among people living within close proximity in villages or small towns. Moreover, the parish in many African countries, particularly in rural places comprises a vast geographic area that the ordained minister may not sufficiently traverse. This makes it difficult to link families together into a single ecclesial community with close personal and permanent bonds between individual members or families with the rest of the parish. In this case, SCCs would offer a crucial pastoral structure that would enhance unity in the body of Christ and society at the grassroots. The leadership and organization of SCCs are exclusively in the hands of the laity.

I have to note that the vision of the African bishops was not to create an African ecclesiology detached from the *one ecclesiology* of the universal church. Rather, to lay out the one ecclesiology and develop it in ways that suit the African context. This adaptation highlights those

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[686] Richard Gray, "Popular Theologies in Africa: A Report on a Workshop on Small Christian Communities in Southern Africa," *African Affairs* 85, no. 338 (1986): 50, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/722215.

aspects of the universal church, that is, communion, unity, and collaboration in ways that respond to the immediate needs of local African communities. In this sense, an African ecclesiology was tailored to the nature and pastoral needs of village communities. Hence, Bishop Kalilombe envisioned a comprehensive role for SCCs. He emphasized the contribution of SCCs to social development. For him, theological reflection at the grassroots should help people achieve liberation and genuine development.[687] In a sense, beyond liturgical /sacramental functions SCCs should be places of awakening people's consciousness to the social needs of their communities and encouraging them to act. Thus, Kalilombe's vision for SCCs involved a holistic transformation of society.[688] This meant challenging structural and systemic problems facing particular communities. In Uganda's context, this would entail confronting problems of division, alienation, and exclusion based on ethnic identity, while at the same time creating ways of overcoming oppression and all forms of injustice against the most vulnerable. The phrase 'Small Christian Communities' was eventually adopted by the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod on Africa of 2009.[689] It thus attained a normalized pastoral structure in Africa.

Fourth, a substantial number of women in Uganda hold leadership positions in different professions for example in education and healthcare as well as government. Within the ecclesial structures, a significant number of catechists and leaders of Small Christian Communities are women. They also hold leadership positions at parish and diocesan levels. There is significant evidence to support the view that women's leadership is possible to link the grassroots to different levels of church and society with regard to justice, transformation, and reconciliation. I underline

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[687] Ibid., 51.

[688] Joseph G. Healey, "Small Christian Communities: Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace in Africa," in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 60.

[689] Synod of Bishops in Africa, "Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops - Instrumentum Laboris," no. 9, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20090319_instrlabor-africa_en.html.

the fact in a predominantly patriarchal society, the fullness of human experience, that is, society's self-understanding and expression is incomplete[690] when women's contribution and talent are muted or denied. Women's leadership offers space for mutual and equal dialogue in both church and society. The prevalence of "patriarchy in all cultures and world religions…" and "deeply intertwined with political, social, economic, and religious forms of domination and oppression"[691] should be challenged to be open to full human experience and expression.

In sum, women's leadership is a necessity in both ecclesial and social structures. Empowering women as leaders not only helps to raise society's consciousness to the "full equivalent human nature"[692] of all but also forms a creative synthesis of the latent talents that can transform Uganda's conflicted reality. This realization has the potential to significantly improve the social conditions of poor women, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, the adaptation of the church structures to suit the African social condition at the village level allows the possibility of linking the local church closer to the issues that affect the nuclear family.

In Uganda, women have a great potential to influence the affairs of the family and the running of village communities. Nevertheless, the patriarchal structures that have confined women to socially constructed domestic roles for generations have to be challenged so that women may claim full equality and potential in the transformation of society. While there is much work to be done in the conscientization of society toward this goal, Small Christian Communities provide a starting point toward a more holistic social transformation and a new system of co-responsibility. Since there is an increase in education and expertise among women in different professional fields, this vision is not unattainable. There is no lack of talent for leadership among women, rather more

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[690] Riley, O.P, "Women's Changing Consciousness - Changing Roles: The Challenge They Bring," 286.
[691] Susan A. Ross, "Rosemary Radford Ruether's Theological Anthropology," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology*, ed. Mary Ann Hindsdale and Stephen Okey (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 290.
[692] Ibid.

space is required in both church and society. As I alluded to above, Small Christian Communities offer a suitable environment for the training of leadership while at the same time providing the loci for events of social reconciliation at the margins as I demonstrate below.

5.3.1.1 Small Christian Communities as Loci for Events of Encounter

There are four aspects that make the Small Christian Community a suitable setting for events of encounter: First, it is the basic social/ecclesial unit closest to families and the grassroots; second, it can be oriented toward a holistic vision in attending to the sociopolitical, economic, and religious issues of communities; third, it offers a practical pastoral response to the 2009 African Synod of bishops that called all the baptized to exercise Christ's threefold ministry as agents of reconciliation, justice and peace; and fourth, it provides a local environment for the formation of responsible leadership and accountability to members of one's own community.

To begin with, as a basic unit of the local church beyond the nuclear family, a SCC opens paths to foster unity within the body of Christ and offers a setting for promoting events, processes, and activities toward reconciliation. As mentioned above social reconciliation requires solidarity with those at the margins. Small Christian Communities are assemblies of nuclear families at the grassroots. The ecclesial structure of the catholic church in Uganda illustrated in the figure below, shows how the nuclear family is closely linked to the Small Christian Communities, Sub-parish, and the parish. Well-organized and functioning *Small Christian Communities* have the potential of transforming the conditions of the most vulnerable.

The Ecclesial Pastoral Structure in Uganda
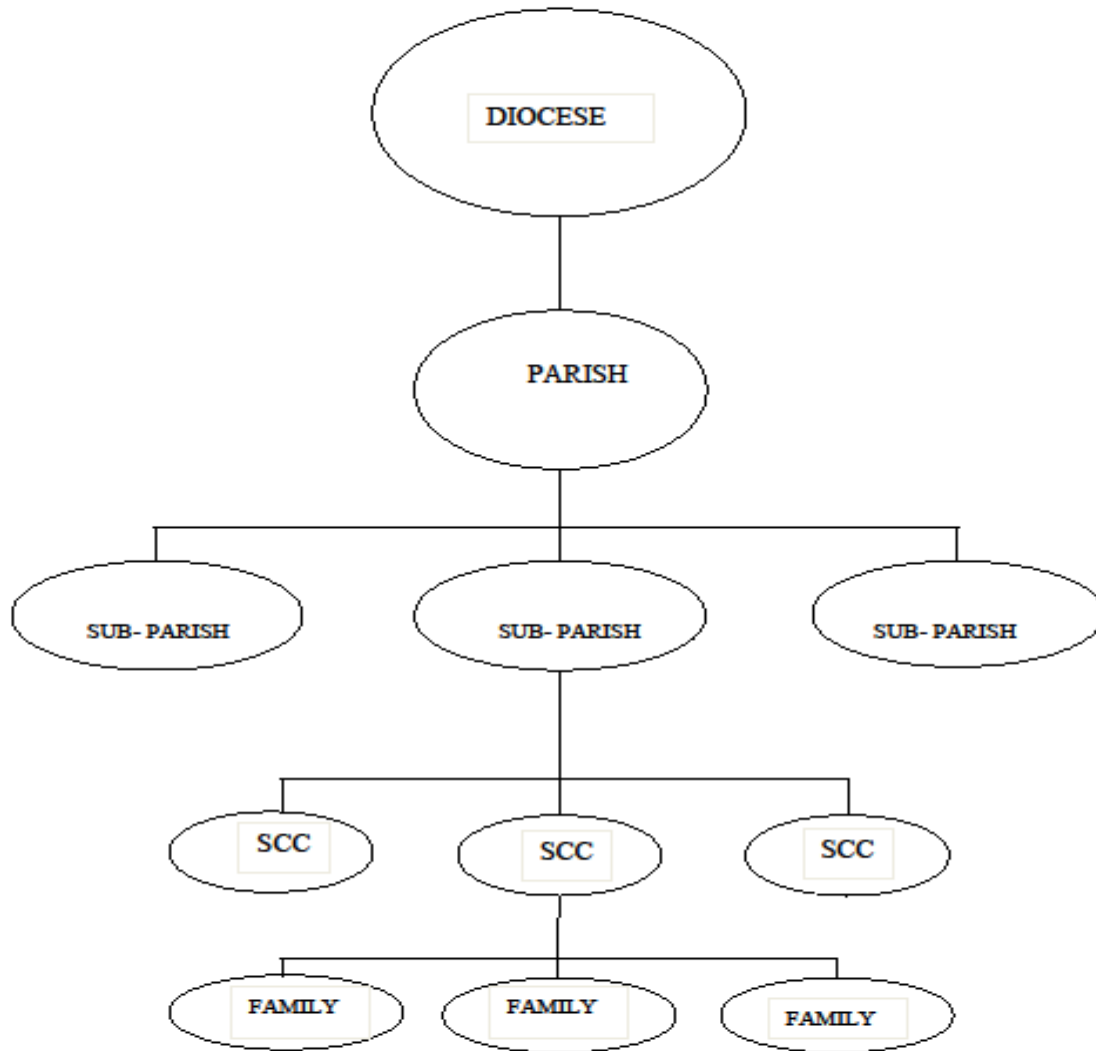
Fig. 1. Ecclesial Structure in the Archdiocese of Kampala, Uganda

As noted above, the vision of bishops who drew up the Small Christian Community structure sought to respond to the needs of the African society. They envisioned a church life based on the closeness of persons in communities where everyday life and work are closely connected so that members of SCCs may experience real interpersonal relations and have a sense of belonging to each other,[693] while creating the capacity to respond to issues that affect a particular community.

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[693] Owen O'Sullivan, "Small Christian Communities – A Way Forward for the Irish Church?," *The Furrow* 64, no. 2 (2013): 92, accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24635749.

In that sense, the call for communion would constitute a concrete response to the needs of persons who live in one community. This vision captures Pope Francis' idea of synodality that affirms togetherness, conversation, and collaboration on the same journey.[694] In this sense, the practical import of synodality finds its expression in the ability of SCCs to work together toward holistic social transformation.

An example of SCCs being oriented toward issues of justice, peace, and reconciliation happened in Kenya in January 2008 after the 2007 post-election violence.[695] Firstly, the incident evoked theological reflection on the relationship between theology and issues of social concern. Theologian Joseph Healey notices that as a result of this incident, there was a gradual shift in the vision of SCCs from exclusively functioning as communities inwardly focused on prayer and liturgy, to becoming more outwardly directed to the mission of justice, peace, and reconciliation.[696] In the aftermath of that violence, SCCs incorporated issues concerning ethnic reconciliation. Another theologian Richard Gray also affirms the significance of Small Christian Communities becoming centers for integrating theological reflection with a number of issues ranging from preserving African cultural heritage to economic and social concerns.[697] This pastoral orientation of SCCs toward a holistic approach to the life of the people in these communities gave a new dimension to their function. Hence, what I am proposing has once been tried. Given the scope of this project, however, I do not offer an assessment of the success or failure of this new orientation of SCCs in Kenya. This is mainly because the conditions in Kenya may not properly reflect or mirror Uganda's context. Nevertheless, the original vision of bishops in establishing SCCs has importance in establishing holistic, self-sustaining, and propagating communities that help people

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[694] Fitzgibbon, "Together on the Way - Pope Francis and Synodality," 532.
[695] Healey, "Small Christian Communities: Promoters of Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace in Africa," 60.
[696] Ibid.
[697] Gray, "Popular Theologies in Africa," 49.

to respond to the needs of a particular context.

The African Synod of 2009 affirms that "Small Christian Communities are to offer assistance in the formation of the People of God and serve as a place for concretely living reconciliation, justice, and peace."[698] The Synod asserts that this task falls under the threefold ministry of Christ as priest, prophet, and king shared by all the baptized. The Synod encourages all the baptized to exercise their vocation in their service to the people of God at all levels of society particularly in the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural realities. It also emphasizes the fact that this vocation requires the conversion of heart and the formation of a 'social Christian conscience." This means that all the baptized guided by the Spirit ought to participate in the community's task of discerning the signs of the times, identifying injustice, and responding to it with the appropriate action. To facilitate the process, these communities should engage in programs centered on the Word of God and the social doctrine of the Church as necessary aspects for the formation of Christian leaders and the critical study of the national and immediate historical reality. Moreover, the Synod encourages the establishment of lay associations and fellowships among the different professional groups including medical, juridical, parliamentary, and academic among others to help create a social fabric that seeks a just and reconciling society. These associations are encouraged to work closely with the Church's pastoral structures in linking the grassroots and exercising the mission of reconciliation, justice, and peace. As I have emphasized above, in Uganda's context Small Christian Communities offer the primary setting for collaborative engagement between church and society.

Lastly, it is important to create more awareness with regard to the style of leadership in the

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[698] Synod of Bishops of Africa 2009, "Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops - Final List of Propositions," Proposition no. 37, accessed February 3, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091023_elenco-prop-finali_en.html.

SCC. As alluded to above, society should not see women leaders over against men, but side by side in a mutual, equal relationship whether in the home, community, church, or society.[699] Rather, equality and mutual collaboration should help create a seamless social fabric toward justice, liberation, and reconciliation for all. In Uganda, there is a significant number of women in leadership roles in professional fields such as nurses, teachers, doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, business, members of parliament, and government officials among others. Leadership structures in SCC should seek to bridge the gap between the most vulnerable at the bottom of society and the top echelons of society both in church and government.

What makes the style of leadership in SCCs significant is the fact that it should be based on equality and co-responsibility among community members. Due to the close proximity of persons, SCCs offer an environment that makes regular communication and dialogue between members possible. Full, active participation is also expected within close relations. The SCCs offer the potential for leaders to learn to work *with* other members more than *for* them, in such structures that are participatory, transparent, and directly accountable to members. Theologian Owen O'Sullivan envisions that leaders in SCCs may learn to orient themselves from: "patronage to partnership, dictation to dialogue, control to trust, playing it safe to a willingness to take risks, the institutions to the community, law to love, being self-centered and worrying about survival, to being outward-looking and concerned with humanity." [700] These aspects promote the efficient functioning of SCCs mainly because they support the vested mutual interest of members in confronting issues that affect them and their communities. Being closely linked to the family structure, women can be empowered not only to connect their families to the larger community but also to the rest of society. Moreover, SCCs can serve as training grounds for leadership at the

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[699] Riley, O.P, "Women's Changing Consciousness - Changing Roles: The Challenge They Bring," 282.
[700] O'Sullivan, "Small Christian Communities – A Way Forward for the Irish Church?," 93.

parish/diocesan council levels and society at large in line with the proposal of the African Synod of 2009 that advocates for the "integral human formation of girls and women (intellectual, professional, moral, spiritual, theological…) (*Proposition no. 47*). While this vision may take years to implement, it must not be ignored, because the education of a woman is integral to the liberation of all.

The presence of active and well-trained women leaders gives the opportunity to build more localized approaches to issues that concern families and local communities. Effective leadership at SCCs provides a model that has the potential of generating a mutual experience of closeness, welcome, and participation in the transformation of the life of the poor. This vision is achievable since Small Christian Communities are central to the lives of people at the grassroots. It is also part of the pastoral plan of the Archdiocese of Kampala as I elaborate on below.

5.3.2. Events, Programs, and Processes of Encounter in the Archdiocese of Kampala

Following the 2009 Synod of African bishops on *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*, the Archdiocese of Kampala drew up a *Three Year Pastoral Strategic Plan (2016-19)* that sought to establish 'reconciliation-minded ecclesial communities.' In its attempt to promote reconciliation, justice, and peace at the grassroots the Archdiocese of Kampala affirms its commitment to coordinate processes aimed at transforming parishes into '*Christian Caring Communities'* that promote faith, hope, and love through social reconciliation. It seeks to transform unjust social structures and conflict through dialogue in order to build the Church as a family of God. [701] As noted above, the African Synod of 2009, provided additional motivation for the pastoral orientation of Small Christian Communities and parishes toward becoming centers for social transformation and reconciliation. In the Archdiocese of Kampala,

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[701] Archdiocese of Kampala, *The Three Year Pastoral Strategic Plan: Archdiocese of Kampala (2016-2019)* (Kisubi: Marianum Press, 2016), 14.

parishes are encouraged to host workshops that educate people about the most pressing needs of communities. Leaders of Small Christian Communities are trained to lead small group discussions, events, and activities (many of which are mentioned above) that promote social reconciliation.

To these initiatives, as alluded to above, I propose that the pastoral planning of different ecclesial provinces should include linking different dioceses and parishes in ways that help persons and communities foster communion and become co-partners in the process of reconciliation across geographical/ethnic borders. I precisely suggest *spiritual adoption* as a form of pastoral practice that establishes sister churches across ethnic/geographic regions. By 'spiritual adoption' I imply a practice by which members of one ecclesial community become closely linked to members of another community through prayer, communication, and encounter. The purpose of creating these relationships is to promote Christian communion through intercultural encounters in the one family of God. This means that events of encounter should include annual intercultural liturgical celebrations across ethnic regions. These may create opportunities to meet and engage with persons of other ethnic groups within the church. This approach might open doors to embracing each other's cultural distinctiveness.

As noted above, eucharistic faith and celebration should be the origin and summit of all activities toward social reconciliation. Liturgy offers a point of intersection that allows differences to dissolve so that mutual acceptance and recognition may begin to emerge. Hence, liturgical celebrations should provide the initial form of encounter that should extend to other areas of human experience like the socioeconomic, cultural, and political realities. While I acknowledge the difficulties involved in overcoming the deeply engrained ethnic resentment, the sharing of the body and blood of Christ challenges any form of alienation, exclusion, and division. Eucharist faith should inspire members of Christ's body to actualize the reconciling presence of Christ in the ecclesial body.

In sum, this chapter has explored the necessity of a pastoral praxis for the incarnational mission of mercy tailored to Uganda's context. I have argued that the event of encounter offers an orientation of the pastoral and social structures toward serving the needs of the people at the margins in response to the problems in the sociopolitical, economic, and religious realities. In order for social reconciliation to be effective, it should necessarily start with the most vulnerable. The pastoral praxis and structures should empower victims to become agents of liberation and reconciliation. Given Uganda's ecclesial and social context, Small Christian Communities provide a suitable milieu for the events of encounter that engender the eradication of injustice and foster a just and reconciling society. I have emphasized that raising consciousness with the regard to equality and women's leadership is crucial in the prosses of reconciliation since, for the most part, women and children constitute the majority of citizenry and victims. Moreover, women provide an untapped reservoir of talent and ability that has the potential to greatly enhance the process of social transformation. Emboldened by the African Synod of 2009, the pastoral planning of the Archdiocese of Kampala and its ecclesial structures offer opportunities for events, programs, and activities for reconciliation to take place at different levels. Solidarity with the most vulnerable provides the possibility of bringing other sectors of church and society together so that each person and community may live justly and walk humbly with God (cf Micah 6:8).

5.4 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The signs of the times shed light on the reflection on the gospel and Christian practice. Ethnic fragmentation in Uganda's history in all its multifaceted dimensions warrants the particular interpretation of Christian faith this project presents. The incarnational mission of mercy centered of the event of encounter is an historically conditioned response that the gospel values demand for Uganda's context. Precisely, love expressed as mercy shapes, inform, and direct Christian

discipleship. Disciples of Jesus should be willing to engage the reality of the *other* in order to transform it for the better. The primary recipient of incarnational mercy should be victims of oppression.

Nevertheless, in Uganda's multilayered conflicted reality the praxis of mercy is not limited to victims alone. Rather, Christian praxis should seek to engage and transform social structures that constitute an organic human experience in the sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and religious relations. Moreover, the oppressor who wields instruments of dehumanizing suffering is necessarily conscripted in the process of reconciliation. Confronting oppressors and unjust social structures that undergird violence against the vulnerable and seeking ways of transforming them is the primary task of mercy. Mercy opens opportunities to the oppressor for repentance and conversion.

Uganda's conflicted reality however, does not comprise a clear-cut dichotomy between oppressors on one side, and victims on other. It is a complex reality of intergeneration mutual exclusion, dehumanization, and alienation framed in ethnic terms. However, this does not exonerate perpetrators of heinous crimes or suggest simple forms of reconciliation that try to 'bury the past.' Rather, it highlights the fact that Uganda's social reconciliation process requires a delicate, multi-dimensional, and intergenerational approach. Addressing a simple dichotomy of victim-oppressor alone does not attend to the complex nature of the country's conflicted reality. A comprehensive social praxis this project proposes seeks to attend to intergenerational healing and transformation of ethnic relations that have wrought the conflicted reality.

The pastoral praxis of incarnational mercy centered on the event of encounter aims to attend to the past, present, and future processes of reconciliation. This implies that Uganda's conflicted ethnic reality requires ways that create unity among persons and communities separated by geographic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries. This praxis offers ongoing opportunities that

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engender the transformation of attitudes, practices, and structures that undergird sociopolitical, economic, and cultural divisions. Confronting ethnic negative ethnic ideology with all its discourses, narratives, and representations that dehumanize the *other*, helps persons and communities create reconciling relations. In this sense, my objective in this project is to suggest an alternative approach to social reconciliation that challenges the catholic church and invites other religious traditions, cultural, social, civil, and government institutions to the urgent need for reconciliation.

From a catholic Christian perspective, the event of encounter is centered on the communion that eucharist faith demands. The catholic church in Uganda is not exempt from ethnic divisions from within. The credibility of the prophetic voice that challenges and invites others institutions, relies on the example of unity the church itself sets. Hence, the incarnational mission of mercy seeks to transform persons and communities *ad intra* and *ad extra*. It provides ways of interpreting and transforming the reality of the *other.* It seeks to orient the disciple's way of being, relating, and acting. In this way, God's grace avails the disciple opportunities of reshaping *who* she ought to be, *how* she ought to relate to the other, and *what* she ought to do to transform social relations.

All in all, the holistic transformation requires both openness to God's grace and perseverance in the task that lies ahead regardless of the difficulties involved. The historical transformation reconciliation seeks is not solely wrought by human agency. It is God's work of redemption that calls human involvement. Moreover, establishing a transformed social reality should be steeped in a spirituality and pastoral praxis that only God's grace can sustain. Hence, when all is said and done, all God's people may experience a reconciling presence that anticipates the eschatological communion in God's Kingdom.

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