Scandal Must Come: Reconciliation as a Divine-Human Kenotic Event in World Immersed in an Culture of Violence and Death

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SCANDAL MUST COME: RECONCILIATION AS A DIVINE-HUMAN KENOTIC EVENT IN A WORLD IMMERSED IN A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AND DEATH

A Dissertation Written and Submitted in Partial
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Abstract

This dissertation grows from our experience of the perennial problem of violence and conflict witnessed at a great scale in Sub-Saharan Africa. In many parts of Africa, especially south of the Sahara, now even worse in the north, there are recurrent bloody conflicts, violence and wars. Ordinarily, one would be lured to argue that what Heraclitus said is the real experience of Africa: where it seems “war is father and king of all things.”¹ In this trend of thought war, bloody conflicts and violence are mere symptoms of the underlying belligerent nature of the universe. In Heraclitus’ philosophical view any change (physical, social, political, economic) can only arise out of war or violent conflict. On the other hand, in reading and hearing stories from all over the world it reveals to us that violence, conflict and the difficulty of establishing lasting peace is a universal problem, not only African. This realization triggered this study to see if we could establish common roots to the problem of violence in the world and at the same time to seek ways of reconciling people in the aftermath or even during the conflict. Therefore although the African situation provoked the thought, our research covers the anthropological roots to the universal problem of recurrent violence that has immersed our world into a culture of death. However in the last chapter we will specifically draw our attention to the nature and mission of the Church of Africa in its social context in order to ascertain the foundational causes of the persistent violence and so seek ways to reconciliation. Employing René Girard’s mimetic anthropology and trinitarian/eucharistic theology we argue that reconciliation is a Divine-Human self-emptying event because the one who initiates reconciliation must be ready to surrender to the offending other and become the price of that reconciliation. The Trinity and the gift of the Eucharist just before the paschal mystery presents to us that God, the offended other but loving other, in Jesus became the price of our reconciliation. Therefore every work of reconciliation is an imitation of a self-emptying God in Christ Jesus.

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1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In his 802 page work *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*, Steven Pinker, a Harvard University psychologist argues that the ‘better angels’ of human nature have triumphed over the ‘angels of darkness’ and led to the reduction in violence in the past few millennia. Pinker posits psychological processes that make human beings either violent or peaceful. There is within a human being coming from evolution a propensity toward predation and dominance, the bad angels of our nature. At the same time we have within us an angelic side from where we can exercise self-control of our instincts to predation and dominance. Basing his argument on scientifically collected data which should not be overlooked, Pinker concludes that there has been a movement from violence to nonviolence although his own data betrays the thesis because there were more deaths in violence on average in twentieth century than in the few preceding centuries. Probably Pinker will feel vindicated if at the end of the twenty-first century merely a few millions will be killed compared to the preceding centuries. He is probably overstating his trust in the “better angels” of our nature in postulating a relatively steady decline of violence. Looking at events of violence all over the world it is not enough to talk about absolute numbers and draw sweeping conclusions basing on a relative decrease in numbers.

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1 Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*, (New York, Penguin Group, 2011), 129-288, argues that people only look at relative numbers as they are publicized by the media and conclude that violence is on the rise but a scientific research like his unveils the reality that violence is actually on the decline. However one would argue that it is not enough to postulate a decrease in violence based on numbers because killing a thousand is actually not better than having five hundred killed. The question should touch even a deeper reality, is the violence that left a thousand dead worse than the one leaving only a hundred dead?
Unfortunately, events show us that just from the twentieth century unto this day we can sing a litany of horror facing us: World Wars I and II, Auschwitz and the entire Jewish holocaust, Persian Gulf War, the Balkan ethnic cleansing, the Rwanda genocide, the 9/11 attacks in USA, Darfur’s near genocidal massacres, Ivory Coast’s bloody conflict, clashes in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, ethnic clashes in Kenya, rape and murder in Democratic Republic of Congo, bloody shootings in Norway and USA, to crown it all, government led massacres in Syria. One cannot fail to stop and sigh with grief for the situation of our world.

The original insight of this dissertation grows from our experience of the perennial problem of violence and conflict witnessed at a great scale in Sub-Saharan Africa. In many parts of Africa, especially south of the Sahara, now even worse in the north, there are recurrent bloody conflicts, violence and wars. Ordinarily, one would be lured to argue that what Heraclitus said is the real experience of Africa: where it seems “war is father and king of all things.”² In this trend of thought war, bloody conflicts and violence are mere symptoms of the underlying belligerent nature of the universe. In Heraclitus’ philosophical view any change (physical, social, political, economic) can only arise out of war or violent conflict. On the other hand, in reading and hearing stories from all over the world it reveals to us that violence, conflict and the difficulty of establishing lasting peace is a universal problem, not only African. This realization triggered this study to see if we could establish common roots to the problem of violence in the world and at the same time to seek ways of reconciling people in the aftermath or even during the conflict. Therefore although the African situation provoked the thought, our research covers the anthropological roots to the universal problem of recurrent violence that has immersed our world.

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into a culture of death. However in the last chapter we will specifically draw our attention to the nature and mission of the Church of Africa in its social context in order to ascertain the foundational causes of the persistent violence and so seek ways to reconciliation.

This work postulates that the roots to the problem of violence are anthropological because central to hominization is the imitation of others. Put in another way, human beings as social beings become what they really are and learn how to be in the society through imitation of others. In imitating what our neighbor desires or what we think he/she desires can have two divergent ends. The first is that through imitation we can learn how to love and how to live virtuously in the world. The second is that imitation can also lead us to conflict and violence against the neighbor who possesses what we desire, on one hand, and acts as an obstacle in the way of acquiring what we desire, on the other. This process of hominization touches the issues of identity and uniqueness, resemblance and difference, convergence and divergence, unity and otherness in human relationships. If we identify with the person closely enough, we will want to have what he/she possesses or worse enough to be what the other person is, since it is he/she who makes the things we want desirable. In this regard, if the imitation of the other’s desire is not controlled then rivalry and enmity controls the relationship. Therefore aware that such kind of imitation leads to violence, humanity must seek ways of preventing its own extermination through a situation of war of all against all, foreseen by Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679). Humanity throughout history has controlled violence or reconciled warring parties through unanimous violence against a victim who is falsely regarded as the cause of the crisis. Unfortunately, “since the dawn of humanity, millions of innocent victims have been killed in this way in order to enable their fellow humans to live together, or at least not to destroy one
another.” In other words, the “sacrifice” of innocent people assumed to be the cause of crisis has been a solution out violence but this solution is temporary and dangerous because it repeats itself at every crisis.

Evidently, in Africa and indeed throughout the world trends of violence keep on repeating themselves over and over which raises the question: why genuine and lasting peace seems to be impossible for Africa? To answer this question it is important to realize that in dealing with violent conflicts we are actually dealing with the event of conflict itself, the errant structures which fuel the situation and the permanent violent cultural worldviews, remaining the same for a long time. Moreover direct acts of violence and structural violence are the manifestation of the permanent violent cultural worldview that has kept our world in incessant conflict and death.

This dissertation takes seriously the presence of the cultural worldview where the logos of war and violence are the founder and king of all things. Our goal is to confront the logos of violence with the logos of love revealed to us by Jesus Christ, the Crucified Lord in his self-giving and forgiving surrender to humanity, in his life and in his passion. It is for this that we posit reconciliation through self-emptying love and not through the sacrifice of victims as a new model of living together in peace. We argue that the way towards answering the problem of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa is human imitation and its subsequent participation in God’s self-emptying love. It means the communion of the trinitarian persons is to be the model of human relationships in the world. This is to say that reconciliation is in the first place a scandal of the inter-trinitarian mutual self-surrender in love, which entails total self-emptying relationships

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3 René Girard, Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre, tr. Mary Baker, (East Lansing, Michigan, Michigan State University Press, 2010), ix
between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, which can rightly be conceived as kenosis. This participation in God’s love reveals that unity and otherness, identity and uniqueness, resemblance and difference are not obstacles to communion but a condition of its possibility.

Secondly, developing from God’s kenosis, reconciliation is a scandal of loving surrender among human beings as a participation in the life of the triune God through grace. In this case, reconciliation in the world starts with God, gratuitously giving God’s self to humanity unreservedly in order to change the broken covenantal relationship into friendship. Departing from God’s covenantal relationship with humanity we see that God, the offended party, pays the price in order to mend the broken relationship. The scandal of divine self-emptying, with its climax the Cross, imitated by humanity brings us to the title of this dissertation, “Scandal must come: Reconciliation as a Divine-Human kenotic event in a world immersed in a culture of violence and death.” Consequently, the model of reconciliation is the inter-trinitarian self-emptying love: agape. The solution to the problem of violence will no longer be based on the logos of Heraclitus, but on the logos of a kenotic God in whose life we all must participate through the grace of Christ our peace.

An important question comes up when we talk about human participation in the life of God. How can human beings participate in the life of God? We propose grace as the only way by which we can share in God’s life. Inasmuch as grace, a free gift of God, enables human beings to share in God’s life it also obligates a Christian to respond to it by concretely living an authentic Christian life. It is for this that we argue for the importance of liturgy because it is a formal ritualization of authentic Christian life. In David W. Fagerberg’s words, “liturgy is the paschal mystery sacramentalized in ritual time, space, assembly, and the arts, like God was incarnated in
This project proposes sacraments, as liturgy of the Church, especially the sacraments of baptism/confirmation and Eucharist, as concrete ways of sharing in the life of God. Taking seriously the sacrament of the Eucharist we demonstrate that the true source and goal of worship is God, who was made human. In this understanding we can only be true to what we really are by living like what we impersonate in worship, a self-emptying triune God. However, the primary objective of this dissertation is to formulate a theology of reconciliation that could serve as a resource for the processes of reconciliation in Africa south of the Sahara where its stratification into ethnic communities, political and religious groups instead of being an enriching experience has oftentimes been a source of violent division, death and misery.

Our method toward this objective is divided into three distinctive features. The first feature is a biblical reading of anthropology through the lens of René Girard’s mimetic theory. Girard’s theory hypothesizes that “because humans imitate one another more than animals, they have had to find a means of dealing with contagious similarity, which would lead to pure and simple disappearance of their society. The mechanism that reintroduces difference into a situation in which everyone has come to resemble everyone else is sacrifice.”

Thus, the biblical reading of anthropology or theological anthropology reveals that the sacrifice of the victim of mimetic contagion is a lie which springs from violence and is sustained by violence. This theological anthropology will focus on the constitutive role of the self-emptying love to our neighbors whom we are called to love unconditionally, even if they be our enemies. This can only be rightly understood as a kenotic anthropology.

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5 René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre*, ix
The second feature of this dissertation is God’s kenotic love which is a pure relation of persons in love which is revealed in the life and the paschal mystery of Christ, on one hand and, the mystery of the Eucharist offered by Christ and by his ecclesial body as a source of unity and charity, on the other. The trinitarian/eucharistic model serves to unveil the lie of Satan [(violent contagion), the father of lies (John 8:44), the murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), the accuser (Rev 12:10), the scandal that must occur (Mt 18:7)], and establish the plan of God since the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before God in love. The eucharistic liturgy is the ritual way of participating in the life of the God of love and in those of one another. It is this twofold participation that will be the model of reconciliation in our society than the unanimous violence against a single victim or a particular community.

The third feature grows from the revelation and knowledge that we have all participated in the logos of violence and so we need pardon and forgiveness. Reconciliation will not only be a renewal of the broken relationships, but more importantly a “contagion” of self-giving and forgiving love because of the realization that God has forgiven us in Christ and so made us ambassadors of Christ to the world. Reconciliation fashioned from the perspective of Africa where the Church is theologically named “Church-as-Family of God,” will take seriously the importance of the family in Africa and enlighten it with the goodness of Christ. This family of God, as a community of reconciled and reconciling people, if it wants to be effective in reconciliation, should address the problem of the limited family worldview to give it a more inclusive feature which will cut across the boundaries that divide us adversity between tribes, ethnic communities and races.

The dissertation will be divided into three main parts in five chapters. The first part will consider “the genesis of conflict:” this will cover the first chapter in which we will formulate a
theological anthropology for a violent world. The second part will talk about “inter-trinitarian
kenosis as a reversal of violent mimesis:” this will be done in two chapters reflecting on kenotic
soteriology and the Eucharist as a way of participating in the life of a triune God and in one
another’s life. The third section will conclude that “reconciliation is a contagion of self-giving
and forgiving love:” this will also be done in two chapters presenting the theology of
reconciliation in a violent world and the Church’s mission of reconciliation in Sub-Saharan
Africa. Thus, arguing for reconciliation as an urgent mission of the whole Church and more
importantly the Church in Africa south of the Sahara in its social context because reconciliation
introduces a new model of establishing peace and harmony: the self-surrendering love or
forgiveness.
PART ONE

THE GENESIS OF CONFLICT
CHAPTER I

2.0 THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY FOR A VIOLENT WORLD

Recurrent events of violence tell us of a world marked by great human brokenness escalating into alienation from God, from one another and indeed from creation. The situation leaves us with two avenues to tread. The first, which is pessimistic, is to accept that the world since its foundation has ever been a violent place such that to imagine a peaceful world is but an illusion. The second avenue is optimistic as it recognizes the presence of both good and evil in the world. It acknowledges that even though there is no other world but a violent one, we have in our midst great opportunities and examples which reveal the lie of violence. The acknowledgement that the world in its goodness is also torn apart by violence, conflict and division makes it imperative to be very attentive to opportunities and examples, theories and practices which would help us to heal the wounds caused by these atrocities.

The goal of this chapter is to formulate a theological anthropology that will be a resourceful tool in understanding and changing a world immersed in a culture of violence and death. This theological anthropology will be rooted in God’s self-emptying love manifested in the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ, and it is for this that it can only be conceived in its rightful place as a “kenotic anthropology.” Kenotic anthropology is an anthropology of divine-human love witnessed in the event of the incarnation, life, teaching, and the paschal mystery of Christ as its climax where God is revealed as self-emptying and forgiving love. Drawing from the theory of imitation we will argue that to be truly human is to live like Jesus, who though was in the form of God, “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but rather emptied himself” (Phil. 2:6-7), taking the form a slave and experiencing death on the Cross. We will
achieve this goal of formulating a theological anthropology in the context of conflict, violence and suffering by employing the mimetic theory of René Girard. Nevertheless before we turn to Girard let us give a definition to what we will be referring to as violence in this work.

2.1 TOWARD A DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

Walking in New York City by the headquarters of the United Nations facing the wall on the opposite side one’s eye is caught by the inscription: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4). This vision of Isaiah has captured the hearts of many people who try to work for peace in the world as they imagine a future without divisions, no borders, and an earth where peace and justice will flourish; in short a future without violence. It could be this interpretation of the text that inspired the formation of the UN to spearhead the movement of the world toward a nonviolent coexistence and to end bloody World Wars.

S. Tamar Kamionkowski sees the prophecy starting with a cosmological tone, envisioning Zion as the highest mountain of the Lord to which all the nations will stream upward defying all the laws of gravity as it involves an image of a river flowing up the mountain. The reason given for such a flow of nations to Zion, the house of the God of Jacob is that they may be instructed in God’s ways and learn God’s justice. The justice of God will inspire the nations to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. No more training for war will be required. Kamionkowski agrees with Baruch J. Schwartz\(^1\) that Zion as the setting is more juridical than educational or ritual. However Kamionkowski is of the opinion that this setting is

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\(^1\) Baruch J. Schwartz, “Torah from Zion,” in *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, tr. Thomas Trapp, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press), 91, in which Schwartz argues that the presence of the verbs ‘judge,’ adjudicate, reprove, refers to Isaiah’s imagination of a High Court of Arbitration where justice is administered fairly and it is for this that all the nations will seek judgment from Zion.
not necessarily the High Court of Arbitration as Schwartz would have it, but rather, “the prophet, imbued with Zion theology, imagines Zion as the center of the world, the capital city of all lands, with the mountain towering above all the others. Peoples will be united in their shared submission to the dominion of the God of Israel and his human representative from the Davidic line.”\(^2\) For Isaiah more than anything this vision is about the transference of power from Nineveh to Zion, from the seat of human power to Zion, the seat of divine instruction, justice and fairness and so it is there that the nations will learn the ways of the Lord. Isaiah envisions an end to war and all forms of physical violence because the nations will submit to the divine power in Jerusalem. It is true that Isaiah envisions the eradication of war, but can we also conclude that he also envisions the obliteration of violence in all its manifestations?

We cannot accurately give an answer to the question above unless we are able to give a comprehensive definition to what we mean by the term violence. William T. Cavanaugh in his book, *The Myth of Religious Violence* takes a survey of many different theorists who propose a link between religion and violence and so comes up with a definition common to most of these theorists. Cavanaugh concludes that all their definitions would come up to this: “‘Violence’ in their writings generally means injurious or lethal harm and is almost always discussed in the context of physical violence, such as war and terrorism.”\(^3\) Cavanaugh adopts this general definition for his work. In our view this definition is very restrictive because it does not include the wider understanding of violence by limiting violence only to physical aggression. It is surely a difficult project to define violence because it involves permanent cultural perceptions which


deem some acts as violent and others nonviolent. There are some acts of aggression and processes of so subtle violence which infiltrate human relationships which sometimes appear to us as simply the normal way of being in the world. The good examples could be sexism, classism, racism or nationalism. We will come back to explain this point so let us not preempt it.

The definition of violence requires a more comprehensive understanding that takes into account even the most subtle manifestations of violence. Terrence E. Fretheim defines violence in his article *God and Violence in the Old Testament* as “any action, verbal or nonverbal, oral or written, physical or psychical, active or passive, public or private, individual or institutional/societal, human or divine, in whatever degree of intensity, that abuses, violates, injures, or kills.” Fretheim comes to this definition in order to encompass both human and divine violence to avoid limiting violence only to human physical aggression. Violence in his view is more than just killing people, but it must cover all those words and actions which kill people slowly especially the psychological violence which damages, demeans and depersonalizes others. We want to level a criticism to this kind of definition because it cannot stand when a particular act of violence is perpetrated by a criminal on one hand, and on the other, the same act is done by a police officer on duty understood as enforcing the law. Like Kamionkowski we see the weakness of this definition in not being able to account for more complex matrix of coercion and the justification of certain power dynamics. Kamionkowski argues:

A criminal and a public officer may commit the same act, and yet their differing status leads us to call the former ‘violence’ and the latter ‘enforcement of the law.’ Their actions may equally be coercive, and yet assigned different moral status. Thus we see that our very description of some

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rather than other acts as ‘violent’ or ‘coercive’ presumes prior commitments to certain kinds of acts which we wish to justify.\textsuperscript{5}

We could argue that in trying to justify God’s violence in the Old Testament, Fretheim comes to the conclusion that God is seen to have acted violently towards people only because people themselves had in the first place acted violently. Fretheim argues that “if there were no human violence, there would be no divine violence.”\textsuperscript{6} In the vision of Isaiah we started with, we can see that for Fretheim it goes without questioning or it is just normal that there should be the transference of domination from the powers in Nineveh to the domination by God. The violence of God often marking all the turning points in the Old Testament is justified by Fretheim as good violence or no violence at all because it is only God’s response to bad human violence.

In our reflection we will not concentrate on formulating a fixed definition of violence but on looking at violence in a framework where it will be conceived and analyzed from the general dynamics of its causes than from its varied manifestations. Johan Galtung does a good job because instead of working out a definition of violence he works on a framework in which violence manifests itself. Galtung talks of three forms of violence: direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. For Galtung direct violence is understood as a form of physical aggression with injurious and lethal consequences. This conception of violence is captured in the definitions of Fretheim and Cavanaugh. Secondly, structural violence is a systematic way in which social structures prevent people from achieving their self-actualization. The immediate examples of structural violence are racism, classism, sexism, tribalism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism because they involve a systematic process which disguises the demeaning violence in these structures. In our contemporary world terrorism has become the catchword of structural

\textsuperscript{5} S. Tamar Kamionkowski, “Violence in Prophetic Literature,” 40

\textsuperscript{6} Terrence E. Fretheim, “God and Violence in the Old Testament,” 21
violence. Terrorism in all its forms cannot be overcome without the consideration of structural violence because terrorism involves policies which marginalize, oppress, and disempower a great segment of humanity. Therefore we cannot only think of terrorism in the context of direct violence while relegating structural violence to the periphery.

Finally, we have cultural violence. Galtung defines cultural violence as “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic and mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimize direct and structural violence.” Cultural violence renders people blind to the reality of violence inherent in all the acts motivated by culture. Even if symbolic or cultural violence does not kill or maim a person like direct and structural violence it breeds the two forms of violence. Galtung points out that “the study of cultural violence highlights the way in which the act of direct and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society. One way cultural violence works is by changing the moral color of an act from red/wrong to green/right or at least acceptable: an example being ‘murder on behalf of the country as right, on behalf of oneself wrong.” Galtung argues that “direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process with ups and downs; cultural violence is an invariant, a ‘permanence’ remaining essentially the same for a long period.”

A good example of cultural violence is the modern judicial system which tries by all means to rationally control violence; it is a myth of vengeance. The judicial system renders an act of aggression or punishment given by the court to someone, for example, who had killed

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8 Ibid., 292

9 Ibid., 294
another as no violence at all or as good violence. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly sums up Girard’s
treatment of the legal system as rationally controlled violence like this: “Thus we have the
following sequence in the transformation of vengeance into law: (1) uncontrolled vengeance (the
primary and direct act of aggression), (2) ritually controlled vengeance (sacrifice in primitive
communities – structural violence), and rationally controlled vengeance (legal system – cultural
violence).”¹⁰ The modern legal systems make vengeance look like good violence and the whole
community accepts it that way. Consequently, we can argue that cultural violence which is a
condition of possibility of direct and structural violence is a more subtle form of violence which
calls us to search for its foundations in our world. In this regard a comprehensive definition to
violence must encompass the reality of violence as an event, as a process and as an invariant or a
permanent situation. This challenges us not to concentrate on the present violent situation
relegating to the periphery the foundation of original violent human behavior patterns.

The definition we are going to adopt in this work is that violence is those aspects of
human actions springing from cultural symbols, myths, images, and stories learnt from others
which in a systematic and structural way directly abuse, dehumanize, violate, injure or even kill
the other or the person in ourselves. This definition is preferred because it tries to capture
violence from human cultural behavior patterns forming a structural process from which direct
violence comes forth. This is important for us because we are constituted human beings. We are
formed by others in the world. We believe this definition captures the theme of this dissertation
since we are reflecting on violence in the world especially Africa south of the Sahara where
tribal and ethnic differences which were supposed to be a source of inspiration have

¹⁰ Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, (Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress,
1992), 33. What is in the brackets is our own emphasis to sharpen an understanding of violence as direct,
structural and cultural form of aggression toward the other or oneself.
unfortunately fueled violence. If violence is an important category in understanding human behavior in the world and in a context like that of Sub-Saharan Africa, then what inspires it? How can we stop violence from being a defining category in human relationships? If we have to stop violence from being a defining category what shall we replace it with? Where and why violence comes to play a defining role in all this is what Girard helps us to understand.

René Girard is a retired Andrew B. Hammond Professor of French Language, Literature and Civilization at Stanford University. He was born in Avignon, southeastern France on 25th December 1923. Girard is an author of many important books in the field of literature and anthropology viewed through the lens of mimesis, among which stand Deceit, Desire and the Novel; Violence and the Sacred; The Scapegoat; Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World; A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare; I See Satan Fall like Lightning; Sacrifice; Battling to the End: Politics, War and Apocalypse; and many other works. One of the sources of Girard’s thinking is a close reading of The Golden Bough, James Frazer’s classic study of ancient myths. Frazer suggested that myths throughout the ancient world contained a central element, the periodic sacrifice of a sacred king, dying and then resurrected. For Frazer Christianity represented one more myth.

On the other hand, Girard formulates a mimetic anthropology based on the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments with its early Christian tradition. The Bible opens to us the avenues of understanding human beings in their relation to one another. The Bible, especially the gospel narrative of the crucifixion of Christ, says something that myth cannot say, i.e., the victim of unanimous violence is innocent. Girard argues that Frazer was right to point out the similarities between myth and Christianity but what Frazer did not see was that Christianity is different from myth while being the same. The difference is that Christianity tells you that Christ was innocent
and it is the first time in the history of humanity that myth is read with a victim of unanimity innocent. Such being the case, Christianity destroys mythology by the realization that the victim of communal violence is only a scapegoat sacrificed at the altar of social order. We will treat this theme comprehensively in the section reflecting on Girard’s anthropology.

Girard bases his entire corpus on desire as the fundamental human characteristic. Desire is not something we are born with but it is learnt as human beings (infants) begin to imitate those who preceded them. Gil Bailie argues that desire as distinguished from animal appetite is always aroused by the desire of another. Another way of putting it is that desire is born out of the contemplation of someone else that desires and designates to us the object he/she desires as desirable. This desire is reinforced by imitation because if you imitate someone else it means you admire that person. As soon as both of you desire the same object and that the object desirable only exists in one mode therefore it must be fought for in the long run. The theatrical situation par excellence is that of two people desiring the same object because they designate that object to each other. If the imitated person realizes that he is being imitated this reinforces his/her desire. The person is confirmed in his/her desire by feeling that he/she certainly chose a good object because as soon as the imitator saw it he/she fell in love with it like the first desirer did. Since the imitator desires the same object as the first desirer he/she automatically becomes a rival to the first desirer. Therefore there are three things connected to desire: imitation of the first desirer, the urge to acquire what is desired and rivalry which ensues because the first desirer safeguards the desirable object for him/herself.

Girard argues that in anthropology today there is a silence or even a repulsion from anything that could be called imitation, mimicry or mimesis. Even if there is such unilateral swerve away from mimesis we come to realize that “there is nothing, or next to nothing, in
human behavior that is not learned… to develop a science of man it is necessary to compare human imitation with animal mimicry, and to specify the properly human modalities of mimetic behavior, if they indeed exist."¹¹ Girard hypothesizes that the modern period’s silence on imitation has its roots in the nineteenth century romanticism and individualism; again in the twentieth century the researchers were afraid that they will appear too obedient to the political and social imperatives of their community. “The belief is that insisting on the role of imitation would unduly emphasize the gregarious aspect of humanity, all that transforms us into herds.”¹² Take for example Nazism and its gregarious uniformity. This fear to emphasize the role imitation in human behavior has rendered humanity blind to the reality of the role of imitation in violence and death in our world.

Since desire is acquired through imitation of other people’s desires and that imitation of other people’s desires render the owners of these desires our models and as models they may eventually become our rivals with whom in the end we may fall into war, we need to be aware of its role in learning and even in violence. Consequently, we can formulate a better theological anthropology if we acknowledge the role of imitation in the world’s competitive blindness that has sustained the whole world in a culture of violence and death.

Girard is important for our reflection in this situation because he sets violence within the fundamental human characteristic, “desire.” He argues that desire in its nature is mimetic, acquisitive and rivalrous as we have seen above. Girard’s work hinges on two main points with a third component to reveal the lie of the first two components. The first is that desire is mimetic;

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¹² Ibid., 7
this basic human characteristic has its nature first and foremost imitative, what Girard calls “mimesis.” Desire being mimetic has the potentiality of becoming competitive and violent because it is always other people’s things we desire to appropriate as our own. If the original owners of these desires resist our attempt to appropriate them they automatically become our rivals or stumbling blocks which Girard calls “scandal.” The imitator/model relationship ends into total scandal as “each tries to push aside the obstacle that the other places in the path. Violence is generated by this process; or rather violence is the process itself when two or more partners try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means.”

The second arm of Girard’s insight is the “scapegoat or single victim mechanism” which he believes is the source of group cohesion and social order, as embodied in religious, cultural and political institutions. “A ‘scapegoat’ is initially the victim in Israelite ritual that was celebrated during a great ceremony of atonement (Lev. 16:21)... The ritual consisted of driving

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13 The word mimesis has its Greek origins in the verb mimeisthai which means to imitate, or mimetikos (imitative). The word designates an act or tendency of a being to appropriate as its own what is of other beings or a tendency to imitate unconsciously the subjective desires and attitudes of others. Girard writes, “If the appropriative gesture of an individual ‘A’ is rooted in the imitation of an individual ‘B,’ it means that ‘A’ and ‘B’ must reach together for one and the same object. They become rivals for that object.” Girard here argues that surveying the literature on imitation one will discover that acquisition and appropriation are never included among the modes of behavior that are likely to be imitated. However if this was taken into consideration it would be easy to see that acquisition and appropriation lead to conflict and in the final analysis, violence. Violence comes from the presence of a tendency to appropriative imitation from both sides – A and B; at this point imitation becomes reciprocal with disastrous consequences which set the whole community into war of all against all.


15 The mounting of scandals or stumbling blocks turn the Hobbesian war of all against all into war of all against one who is randomly chosen as the cause of all crises between warring parties. The elimination of the single victim sets the community again into reconciliation. The whole process of identifying and lynching the randomly chosen victim is what is known as the ‘Scapegoat mechanism.’
into the wilderness a goat on which all the sins of Israel had been laid.”¹⁶ The driving out of the scapegoat or emissary goat left the community at peace as they all felt that they were reconciled to God and to one another. The peace, tranquility and reconciliation which follow the expulsion of the scapegoat are the founders of institutions including hominization itself.

There is a third critical argument to the two arms of Girard’s thought which postulates that the Judeo-Christian Bible reveals that human beings are essentially mimetic scapegoaters. The scriptural references to scapegoating, sacrifice and sacrificial law follow the pattern of primitive communities: original violence, selection of a victim, his/her execution or expulsion and reconciliation. However the Judeo-Christian scriptures especially the gospels show that God in Jesus refused to become involved in the spiral of violence inherent in scapegoating. This being the case, we acquire a different kind of model to imitate. Girard argues that the Hebrew Bible and the gospels present to us models which reveal the lie of scapegoating. One of the examples is that Jesus’ “redemptive work consisted rather in ‘turning the other cheek’ (Matt 5:39) and showing only love where a scenario of violence is proposed to him.”¹⁷ It is only by the act of perfect love that Christ once and for all replaced violent mimetic contagion with the contagion of love as the original mode of human relationships. We will deal with these issues conclusively later as we talk more comprehensively about Girard’s mimetic anthropology.

Our argument this far has tried to show that violence has a determining factor in the formation of culture in society. Whenever someone dares to speak about violence in the world, the first reaction with which she/he is confronted is the reality that ever since blood first flowed


in human veins, this world has been a violent place. In other words, violence is the driving force behind all behavior patterns, both individual and social. Moreover violence is not limited to human beings alone but it extends to everything that has life in it. All living organisms kill, devour alive and appropriate other organisms into their system in order to survive. This can be seen in all food chains that all living beings need other beings in order to continue to live. Whenever we think of many tons of food in its varied forms, human beings kill, prepare and eat we are brought face to face with how much violence touches the very existence of human beings in the world. Human beings like all other living creatures do acts of violence to other creatures in order to continue to live on one hand, and on the other to prevent themselves from reciprocal aggression from other living beings as they try to feed and sustain themselves. Human beings share the same impulse to predation and dominance common to all elementary creatures.

This certainly unveils the basic human condition as similar to all elementary living creatures or as animal in nature, existing at the level of self-maintenance and self-preservation, which in most cases become the reasons for acting violently. However human beings do not only exist at this elemental level but transcend it as they experience themselves involved in more violent acts than only those which just pertain to their instincts. More acts of violence come from this other aspect of what it means to be human rather than desire to feed and preserve themselves. It is this second source of violence, violence from human ingenuity that is the concern of this project. Therefore talking about violence in the world of human beings two aspects must be recognized: the elementary animal desire for self-preservation and then human ingenuity which creates more violence, the form of violence human beings themselves spurn but still find themselves involved in.
Most prominent anthropologists have argued that if we want to know anything about human beings and violence we have to turn to their elementally animal condition in the first place, and then, to their human creativity which has bred more violence. Human ingenuity in most cases seeks to make human life easy, better lived and free from evil, but unfortunately in many circumstances it has also been the cause of suffering in the world. Ernest Becker in his ground breaking work *Escape from Evil*, whose thesis is that “in seeking to avoid evil, man is responsible for bringing more evil into the world than organisms could ever do merely by exercising their digestive tracts. It is man’s ingenuity, rather than his animal nature, that has given his fellow creatures such bitter earthly fate.”\(^{18}\) Becker is well aware that at the elementally level or animal level human beings participate in what all other living organisms do. He argues:

At its elemental level the human organism, like crawling life, has a mouth, digestive tract, and anus, a skin to keep it intact, and appendages with which to acquire food. Existence, for organismic life, is a constant struggle to feed- a struggle to incorporate whatever other organisms they can fit in their mouths and press down their gullets without choking… a science-fiction nightmare in which digestive tracts fitted with teeth at one end are tearing away whatever flesh they can reach, and at the other end are piling up the fuming waste excrement as they move along in search of more flesh. I think this is why the epoch of the dinosaurs exerts such a fascination on us: it is an epic food orgy with king-size actors who convey unmistakably what organisms are dedicated to.\(^ {19}\)

What Becker labors to show is that devouring other living organisms manifested at the elementary level is the condition of possibility of continuing to exist. “Beyond the toothsome joy of consuming other organisms is the warm contentment of simply continuing to exist – continuing to experience physical stimuli, to sense one’s inner pulsations and musculature, to delight in the pleasures that nerves transmit.”\(^ {20}\) The driving force for all human organisms is that of self-preservation. The urge that comes from this desire to self-preservation can be catastrophic


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 1-2

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 2
to humanity because it takes the form of the search for “‘prosperity’ – the universal ambition of human society.”  

In this regard prosperity requires the maintenance of the high level of the organismic functioning; avoiding any discomfort but only seeking the pleasure of existing without the fear of finitude. Whatever works against human prosperity in this open form is bad and must be avoided at all cost. The two universally accepted enemies of human prosperity at human organismic condition are disease and death which human beings in all consciousness seek to avoid and repress. Becker argues that “the fear of death must be present behind all our normal functioning, in order for the organism to be armed toward self-preservation. But the fear of death cannot be present constantly in one’s mental functioning, else the organism could not function.”

Psychologically, humans repress this fear of death not allowing it to be opened up but keeping watch over all the avenues from which it may approach them. As a result, humans try at all costs to preserve themselves from coming to an end in death or annihilation.

Eugene Webb reflecting on an article, Terror Management Theory of Self-esteem and Cultural worldviews: Empirical Assessment and Conceptual Refinements, makes an interesting observation. In this article which brings together the findings of different experiments in terror management, Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon and Tom Pyszczynski come to the same conclusions as Becker that cultural worldview and self-esteem are the main instruments of repressing the fear of death. The cultural worldview works towards maximizing the opportunities for individual fulfillment on one hand and on the other it is meant to minimize the conflicts that come about because of collisions between different forms that the denial of death takes. For these three authors, the cultural worldview consists of shared illusions that serve to ameliorate anxiety.

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21 Ibid., 2

In other words, the cultural grouping is just a hopeful mystification of the lie that entails the denial of death. “The fear of death is a powerful unconscious motive producing polarized worldviews and scapegoating.”

Becker argues that “each society is a ‘hero system’ which promises victory over evil and death.” Therefore Becker sees each historical society as a determined lie, a mystification of a lie which fosters the victimization in two forms: “the tyranny practiced within society, and in terms of victimage practiced against aliens or enemies outside it.” In this regard, Becker concludes that human beings’ “natural and inevitable urge to deny mortality and achieve a heroic self-image are the root causes of human evil.” From this repression of the idea of death flows victimization and “transference” Transference is a term coined by Sigmund Freud to explain the behavior he observed among his clients who either deified him or demonized him, by according to him the power to be able to do good or harm. The reality of having to see in one person (counselor) the power to be able to do good or to harm became for Freud two forms of transference: positive and negative. Becker applies transference to scapegoating and adulation of heroic leaders in a community. Scapegoating is for Becker a negative transference while the adulation of heroic leaders in a particular society is seen as positive transference. Eugene Webb argues that it is in connection to the concept of transference that Becker makes clear the

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24 “Hero system” means that society everywhere is a living myth of the significance of human life, a defiant creation of meaning. By ‘hero system’ is meant man’s natural and inevitable urge to deny mortality and achieve a heroic self-image. The denial of mortality and self-esteem are the root causes of human evil”

25 Ernest Becker, Escape from Evil, 124

26 Ibid., 125

27 Ibid., xvii

significance of religion in society. He argues that “all of life involves a kind of religiousness, for
good or ill, because it elicits our transferences, leading us to attribute godlike stature to figures
who fascinates us… transference takes natural awe and terror and focusses them on individual
beings, which allows us to find the power and horror all in one place instead of diffused
throughout a chaotic universe.”  

Transference is a mechanism to banish anxiety from
consciousness, which the fear of death bestows on the person.

Therefore it is in human desire to escape from evil that humanity has brought into the
world evil upon evil. Our world is a violent place because it is essentially in human desire to
escape from evil that we are assailed by evil. At human level violence always breeds violence
because every primary act of violence will provoke revenge or some form of vengeance which
eventually falls back to violence. This is either violence in self-defense or violence to intimidate
anyone who might ever think of launching an attack. Moreover, in order to make sense of the
continuous presence of violence in the world we should not lose sight of the human desire to
escape from violence. Unfortunately, what is hidden is that human beings since the foundation of
the world have tried to stop violence by employing violence itself, unanimously and ritually
accepted violence. The scapegoat mechanism which is the foundation of ritual sacrifices has
been employed as a way to stop violence. This ritually accepted violence has the ability to
establish peaceful coexistence in the community by relaxing the socially tense situation. At this
point let us establish the fact that violence is the driving force of most of human behavior more
than just the elemental need to live forever.

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29 Ibid., 74-75
What Becker has done turns our gaze to what we have already set as a fundamental component of this chapter as it draws deeply from René Girard’s mimetic theory. Girard’s project stipulates that all human behavior, especially violent behavior cannot be worthily considered without reference to *mimesis*, a tendency to imitate consciously or unconsciously other people’s desires. The fear of death certainly is intensified by imitating other peoples’ fear of their own death. Hence imitation would explain much better why there is so much reprisal and counter reprisal in the world than could the fear of death and its anxiety. Mimesis is the force that brings people together and it is even the force behind formation of religion, language and culture. Mimesis does not only lead to positive social cohesion but it also leads to rivalry and conflict because it is always other oriented. Therefore human beings imitate each other’s desires, each other’s repression of the anxiety in front of death, each other’s hostility and even murderous rivalry. In Girard’s view scapegoating is a result of mimesis, a way to stop the consequences of mimesis from obliterating a community in crisis from the face of the earth. Girard comes to the conclusion that what gives tune to all human groupings is violence emerging from the imitation of others. This is because it is violence that bestows value on objects of desire, which are often times mistaken to be the cause of conflict between people who find themselves desiring the same objects. For Girard it is violence born from desire and thus present with human beings for imitation and intensification of desire, its own source, which sets the tune of all social cohesion.

Although having already articulated Girard’s mimetic theory at its turning points (desire: mimetic, acquisitive and rivalry; scapegoat mechanism; social cohesion or reconciliation), it will benefit us to analyze it in a more systematic way. However let us give a synthesis to what we have been doing in the words of Gil Bailie:
Human history is the relentless chronicle of violence that it is because when cultures fall apart they fall into violence, and when they revive themselves they do so violently. Primitive religion is the institution that remembers the reviving violence mythologically and ritually reenacts its spellbinding climax. Primitive religion grants one form of violence a moral monopoly, endowing it with enough power and prestige to prompt other forms of violence and restore order. The famous distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ is born as the culture glorifies the decisive violence (sacred) that brought the episode of chaotic violence (profane) to an end and made warriors into worshippers.\textsuperscript{30}

It is for this that our definition of violence sought to embrace the cultural worldview with its myths, symbols and stories which harbor violent traits. Secondly, the definition took into consideration systematic structures which go unsuspected as sheltering violent trends. It is at the third level that our definition considered direct acts of violence as the energy driving cultural and social systems. The point in our project is that cultural violence is the source of both direct and structural violence on one hand, and on the other, it is direct violence that becomes the energy of the cultural violence. Therefore having argued that violence sets the tune in human relationships with disastrous consequences we need to discover another paradigm which would replace violence as a determining category. This being the situation, then, what could be the alternative category that will move us from the spiral of violence to peaceful human relationships?

\textbf{2.2 RENÉ GIRARD’S MIMETIC ANTHROPOLOGY}

Anthropology in the west since Descartes has privileged an individual person understood as a thinking “I” or subject over the relational character of human beings. Hence a human being can easily be defined as a rational being. This definition implicitly brings to the fore an individual who must doubt or even repudiate all external influence so as to come to that which cannot be doubted or independent of an alterior other. Girard seeks to demonstrate that we are constituted human beings therefore anthropology cannot be founded only on an individual person.

without the social influence. From infancy in all the lessons any child learns from its parent by words or actions proclaim, “Imitate me!” In other words the child hears from the parent an invitation to imitation. The moment the child fails to imitate the parent it feels bad or inadequate. However, at the same time a child hears words and perceives actions of a parent saying “do not imitate me on this one” leading the child into confusion. The confusion which comes when an infant hears the words or sees actions which say “imitate me” and at the same time “do not imitate me” leads the infant to question why its parent says ‘yes’ to one thing and says ‘no’ to another although all of these actions are performed by the same parent who gives the orders. The problem then is that the parent whom Girard calls “mediator” or “model” of desire becomes to the child both hero/heroine or model and obstacle to the fulfillment of the infant’s desire as they say in word or action imitate me and then don’t imitate me. Once the infant begins to see the model as an obstacle to some or even to most of its desires then rivalry is set into their relationship. A simple but telling example would illustrate the point here.

Most parents teach their children to play with toys to their children’s amusement and pleasure. The same parents will be observed by their children at work either in a kitchen or in a carpentry shop working with tools which appear like toys to the children whose parents taught them to play with toys. James Alison tells a story of a cuddly toy put into the hands of a baby by its mother who shows the baby how to play with it. The child seeing its mother going into the kitchen and putting a kettle on a hot stove is excited to have another toy introduced to it by the mother who introduced it to the first cuddly toy. “When she (mother) comes back three minutes later and finds the child stretching for the kettle, she screams with panic at the thought of the thing tipping over and scalding the child. How is the child to know that the kettle is not just
another version of cuddly toy?” The child is then fixed into a double bind because of the two commands which say on one hand “imitate me” and on the other “do not imitate me.” “Eager to please by imitating, it has been plunged into the world of rejection and failure to please, and its desire will always be inflected by the double bind.” The eventual posture the child will take is to look at its parents as either models or rivals to the fulfillment of its desires. Alison like Girard articulates this in the following lines: “Man cannot respond to the universal human injunction, ‘Imitate me!’ without almost immediately encountering an inexplicable counter-order: ‘Don’t imitate me,’ (which really means, “Do not appropriate my object”). The second command fills man with despair and turns him into the slave of an involuntary tyrant.” Infants unlike adults may not be able at this early stage of their lives to perceive in the parent (model) an eventual role of a rival, but as they grow they begin to assert their autonomy and recognize that they are at least independent of their parents.

Mimetic anthropology is an anthropology that sets the foundation of human behavior in imitation of other peoples’ things and desires. Michael Oughourlian sums up the nature of human desire as postulated by Girard into two aspects. The first is that “the true nature of desire, is its mimetic character, along with our denial of that truth, leads us ceaselessly to copy within ourselves the desires of everyone we encounter, subjecting ourselves to their influence and by that very act of imitation, making them into rivals and indeed obstacles to the fulfillment of what

32 Ibid., 17
33 Ibid., 147
The second characteristic of desire is that rivalry is always connected with it: “because I desire the same thing as the other and deny his claim to be the origin of that desire, I make him my rival, and as this rivalry takes shape, I am led to desire all the more what he desires and try to take it away from him. In this manner desire and conflict escalate.” The paradox is that the more the obstacles (scandals) repel us, the more they attract us. Since mimetic desire has a repetitive and addictive character scandals (obstacles) will always come.

Girard situates the root of contagious violence in our world in imitation. Imitation is for Girard the fashioner of desire. Drawing deeply from French literature and anthropology he argues that no human desire has its own predetermined object. He states that it is revealing to see what happens between two rivals in relation to both subject and object of desire. “The rival desires the same object as the subject, and to assert the primacy of the rival can lead to only one conclusion. Rivalry does not arise because of the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather, the subject desires the object because the rival desires it. In desiring an object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object.” Desire in itself should not be the cause of violence but it should humanize, and impel us to unite with each other as family, group or community because it is the energy and foundation of all relations with the other and above all it is the first movement that brings all of us to life and so always part of us. Desire is at the root of hominization, culture, religion, economic and political groupings because of its

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35 Ibid., 12
mimetic, acquisitive and conflictive characteristics. It creates persons and draws them to be like others, hence making them social persons.

Alison articulates how desire works in the development of children as social entities in the community as follows:

An infant begins to imitate an adult, reproducing exactly what the adult does, insofar as physical difference permits. There is no “me” in the infant independent of the force which models it. The infant is imitating the form, or appearance of the model. Soon, however, the infant is drawn to the look, or the hand, of the model indicating objects outside itself (any object). The same draw that drew the infant to the form of the adult now draws the infant to the object which the model has designated: for instance, a toy “played with” by an adult, put into the child’s hand; the child learns to play with it... we imitate not only what people look like, but what they have. It is the movement toward an object that is exterior to the model which we call desire, and it is this which pulls us away from the model and begins to make us autonomous. 37

The above quotation reveals that mimesis is a constitutive factor which forms the “Self,” the ego. Fundamentally the object is the condition of possibility of our conscious existence as beings autonomous of the model. Desire is essentially the movement of the self toward the object indicated by the mediator and this object makes the imitator or the desirer recognize that he/she is different from the person pointing at an object and the object pointed to. It is at this point that the ‘self’ begins to assert its autonomy as a subject distinct from the model and the object that the ‘self’ is formed. This is what is referred to as hominization or the formation of an individual autonomous ‘self.’

Hominization is reached through our imitation of others in space making us members of social entities like a particular culture, a particular religion or a political group. Since human desire is repetitive in time it gives birth to memory and enables us to speak a particular language and give ourselves a particular identity. “It is thus mimesis in its spatial dimension which keeps humans together, constituting them as social animals (which do more or less the same thing); that

37 James Alison, The joy of Being Wrong, 29
is, it leads to sociogeneisis or the birth of society. It is also mimesis, in its temporal dimension, which keeps each human being together and constitutes each psychologically; that is, it leads to psychogenesis, or the birth of human psyche.”38 In this regard, mimesis is the father of all social organizations but also the individual consciousness of being autonomous. Desire, thus, is the driving force which gives both individuality and autonomy to any member of a particular social entity. Since at all times the other precedes us and we come to desire their desires, then, it is the other who makes us what we are, on one hand, and on the other, we form others as they in turn imitate us. We are all dependent on the desires of others on the other. What we are is the amalgamation of all the desires we have copied from our models and vice versa. Consequently, the formation of the “I” is coterminous with the formation of culture, religion, political entities and all other social groupings.

2.2.1 The Nature of Desire

Girard finds his starting point in the treatment of the nature of human desire in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980). Girard leaves aside the philosophical terrain to concentrate on human sciences and thus he tried to make a balance of three anthropologists: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) (who argues that religion is at the center of society and culture), Henri Hubert (1872-1927) and Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) (both arguing that it is sacrifice which is at the center of culture and religion). These anthropologists provide him with the scheme in which to assert that violence is the energy of all social systems. However Girard advances this assertion by his own discovery that mimetic violence and single victim mechanism are the ones that drive the whole social system. Mythology and Greek tragedy in

38 Ibid., 29
literature became important resources in his understanding of the nature of desire and how desire shapes institutions and creates gods. For example in the famous myth of *Oedipus the King*, the center of conflict is acquisitive desire by which Oedipus eyes the throne of Thebes which his father occupies and eventually he also eyes his father’s wife, his own mother. Oedipus finds in his father both a model and an obstacle to the fulfillment of his desire, the throne of Thebes. The relationship of Oedipus and his father escalates into reciprocal violence as both of them try to defend what they think is legitimately their own desire not another’s, the throne. In mythology the relationship of the people involved is that of a superior and an inferior or master and disciple.

In Greek tragedy the actors, for example *Dionysus* and *Pentheus* are of equal status or brothers who fight for practically nothing tangible, but quibbles centered on divinity or on the person of the other. This is very important because in their fight we can see that the object of desire is even forgotten. We come to realize that what is fought for is not anything material but the very being of the other person, wanting to be like the other. Two things are important here: as brothers they are equal to each other, but as rivals they are mutually intimidated of each other such that they cannot reach at each other’s throat and this being the case the whole fight is directed to a unanimous violence against a substitute victim. This substitute victim assumes a divine status because the brothers begin to look at the victim as having the power to divide and to reconcile. It is here that in Greek tragedy the gods can be very good but also at the same time they can inflict pain. The victim is rendered a god the moment the conflicting parties come to the conclusion that this victim divided us only to unite us, so he/she must be a god.

What is important in Greek tragedy is that the traditional order of looking at things is reversed. Traditionally, the object of desire it thought to ignite conflict, but the new perception is a reverse, positing that it is violence inherent in the desirers which bestows value on the object
desired. Girard believes this inversion of the traditional way of thinking about violence has great revelatory value. He argues that “in traditional view the object comes first, followed by the human desires that converge independently on the object. Last of all comes violence, a fortuitous consequence of the convergence. As sacrificial conflict increases in intensity, so too does the violence.” In the new understanding “it is no longer the intrinsic value of the object that inspires the struggle; rather, it is the violence itself that bestows value on the objects, which are only pretexts for a conflict. From this point it is violence that calls the tune.” Therefore Girard will conclude that Greek tragedy is similar to the Bible because in it the violence that underlies human relationships is revealed. In both Greek tragedy and the Bible it is violence which bestows value on the desired object as it intensifies that desire. The Bible reveals that it is the desiring neighbor who bestows value on the objects he/she possesses or desires; it is conflict and violence against this neighbor which sets the ball rolling. We will come back to this point when dealing with a biblical example (Exod. 20:10) where the neighbor bestows value on the object.

Girard’s trend of thought about the nature of desire also draws a lot from figures like the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), the French romantic writers, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). We would not be able to treat them individually here but it suffices to mention that in Dostoyevsky’s triangular relationship of human passion Girard finds a great resource for his three characteristics of desire: as mimetic, acquisitive and rivalrous. For Dostoyevsky human passion has three aspects. The first is the desiring hero, the second is the mediator who functions as a model and rival, and finally the third party is the object desired.

39 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 144

40 Ibid., 144
Raymund Schwager captures Girard’s critique of Freud in favor of Dostoyevsky’s triangular formulation of human passion as follows:

In Dostoyevsky’s work, desire is not directed towards an original or privileged object. This is a primary fundamental difference with Freud. Desire chooses its objects through the mediation of a model. It is a desire modeled on the other, yet identical with the intense yearning to reduce everything to oneself. From its inception, desire is divided between the self and the other who always seems to be superior and more independent than the self. This is in essence the paradox of pride, identical with desire, and its inevitable defeat. The model designates the desirable object by desiring it himself. Desire is always mimetic of another desire; hence desire of the same object, and the inexhaustible source of conflict and rivalries. The more the model transforms himself into an obstacle, the more desire tends to transform obstacles into models.41

We evidently see this pattern in both myth and tragedy where the actors unveil something unique that human beings are insatiably desirous of other people’s desires. For example let’s take notice of Oedipus’ desire of what his father possesses; the throne of Thebes and his wife. At the end of the day it is not the throne or Oedipus’ mother that are valuable but it is the father who bestows value on them by possessing and desiring them. Oedipus confirms his father’s desire by trying to possess the objects of his father’s desire. By highlighting the role of violence in the whole process we can postulate that the nature of desire is mimetic, acquisitive and conflictive.

2.2.1a Desire as Mimetic

Desire is mimetic in character because it is the desires of the model that the subject always desires. In Girard’s formulation “the reason is that he (human being) desires being, something he himself lacks and which some other person seems to possess. The subject thus looks to that other person to inform him of what he should desire in order to acquire that being. If the model, who is apparently already endowed with superior being, desires some object, that

object must surely be capable of conferring an even greater plenitude of being.” Desire is mimetic in character and that it is the model that designates the desirable object by desiring it him/herself on one hand, but on the other, the subject intensifies the model’s desire by desiring the object chosen by the model.

2.2.1b Desire as Acquisitive

Here Girard gives an example of children in a nursery school where they are put in a room to play with toys, as soon as one child seems to have great pleasure in playing with a particular toy we can immediately observe other children trying to have this particular toy even if there are other hundred toys identical to this one. If the child seems to resist their advances towards the toy it heightens or confirms other children’s desires, this leads to conflict and fight over a single toy which each of the children want to possess. Girard writes: “When one child reaches for a toy, another child suddenly wants that same toy, but not any of the other toys in the room. As adults, we might manage to repress acquisitive mimesis in this open a form, but this restraint does not necessarily save us from acting like children.” On the contrary, even adults are as much involved in the game as children are.

The mimetic quality of childhood desire is universally recognized. Adult desire is virtually identical, except that (most strikingly in our own culture) the adult is generally ashamed to imitate others for fear of revealing his lack of being. The adult likes to assert his independence and to offer himself as a model to others; he invariably falls back on the formula “Imitate me!” in order to conceal his own lack of originality.

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42 René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 146


44 René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 146
The convergence of the two supposedly independent desires on a single object which the two desirers wish to appropriate as their own is the root cause of conflict. In this regard, the immediate cause of conflict is the acquisitive imitation of the desire of the other that leads to desiring what the other desires even including the ‘being’ of that other person, if this be the object of desire. This is so because “the model, even when he has openly encouraged imitation, is surprised to find himself engaged in competition. He concludes that the disciple has betrayed his confidence by following in his footsteps. As for the disciple, he feels both rejected and humiliated, judged unworthy by his model of participating in the superior existence the model himself enjoys.”

Therefore both of them think their desires are not identical and that they are originators of their own desires. In reality what has happened at this point is that even the model begins to desire the desires of the imitator. They have become reciprocal mediator and disciple in a situation of ‘double transference.’ Consequently, even if the model may think she/he has the fullness of being he/she ends up into being a disciple of one’s own disciple, tying to acquire what the disciple designates as desirable, though this is the mediator’s own desire. The only relationship which operates is that of discipleship of the other. The resistance is a refusal by both parties to let the other appropriate their being; their personhood, their object. Both parties stop existing as subjects but rather become doubles of each other. At this level of existence there are no subjects but doubles competing to acquire something or to become someone else, the other. In this regard other people exist and you do not, so you can only exist by taking on the others’ being.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 146
2.2.1c Desire as Rivalrous

Once all distinctions between the model and the disciple are blurred the roles of mediator and imitator are changed to what is considered a monster in tragedy. Monsters in Greek tragedy are always presented to have different features joined to one creature: they will talk of a creature with a human face, with the body of a lion and with wings of an eagle. This is so to obliterate the differences between the model and the imitator. At this point the subject and mediator internalize each other leading to unavoidable conflict because the mediator who manifests to the subject (imitator) that they have the fullness of being shares the same desire with his/her imitator. The collapse of differentiation between the model and the imitator is manifested by a violent mimetic contagion. It is “when all differences have been eliminated and the similarity between the two figures has been achieved, we say that the antagonists are doubles. It is their interchangeability that makes possible the act of sacrificial substitution.” This is what Girard will term as a ‘sacrificial crisis’ since all differences have been obliterated such that either of the parties in the conflict can be sacrificed to pacify the warring community.

Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity can be found here more prominently as he argues that the greatest sin of Christianity is its teaching which tries to obliterate the differences between people by arguing for the equality of the soul of each person before God. Nietzsche envisages that the desire to make all people equal obscures the origin of what he calls *slave morality* which is born out of the desire of the weak for retribution because they cannot share in the greatness of their masters. Nietzsche states that “through Christianity, the individual was made so important, so absolute, that he would no longer be sacrificed: but the species endure only through human

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46 Ibid., 159
sacrifice. All ‘souls’ become equal before God… Genuine charity demands sacrifice for the good of the species- it is hard, it is full of self-overcoming, because it needs human sacrifice. And this Pseudo humaneness called Christianity wants it established that no one should be sacrificed.”

Nietzsche in this critique seeks to emphasize the importance of difference against identity and resemblance against convergence in human relationships.

Our discussion this far brings us to posit that the desire of the model is what creates value which is longed for by the disciple’s desire and in the final analysis even creates the disciple’s (disciple in this case can be either of the two in feuds) whole being. Desire is therefore sustained by maintaining the model as an obstacle without which desire ceases to be. Desire designates the presence of rivalry without which it dies out and what sustains it is the presence of an obstacle. Hamerton-Kelly argues that “rivalry is built into the structure of desire, and this we call ‘scandal’ of desire. Etymologically the scandal is that which causes one to stumble. In its developed meaning, the stumbling block is the hindrance that one loves, the obstacle that gives painful purpose to one’s ever-frustrated and thus ever-renewed desire. Scandal is the essence of unquenchable desire.”

In the same vein Girard says the noun skandalon and the verb skandalizein, “scandal” in Greek “means, not one of those ordinary obstacles that we avoid easily after we run into it the first time, but a paradoxical obstacle that is almost impossible to avoid: the more this obstacle, or scandal, repels us, the more it attracts us.” It is telling to see in the words of Jesus, “Scandal must come” (Matt 18:7), that when the first scandal occurs, it gives

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48 Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, 21

49 René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, 16
birth to others, and the result is *mimetic crises*, which spread without ceasing because scandal creates scandal.

After establishing the fact that mimetic desire will in most cases end into rivalry and even violence it is necessary to assert that violence becomes the mover of all the processes that follow. As we have already postulated above the other dominant theme of Girard’s work after the mimetic nature of desire is the “Surrogate Victim or the scapegoat.”\(^{50}\) Hamerton-Kelly states

Mimetic rivalry in its advanced stage can easily change its object. Violence has the capacity to substitute one object for another. There are two factors at work in this substitution. One is the obscuring of the object in the advanced stage of rivalry, the detachment of the rivalrous energy from any particular object by its submersion in the subjective conflict; the other is the spontaneous agreement of the mutually intimidated rivals to transfer violence to a vulnerable substitute. This is formally the rediscovery of the object, now as something to be destroyed rather than possessed. The conflict reaches the point at which the rivals, now doubles, find that they share the desire to destroy each other, but since they are mutually intimidated and identical, they cannot proceed. Then they rediscover the object pole and deflect the destructive energy from one another onto the substitute.\(^{51}\)

It is the surrogate victim that makes the rivalrous doubles to unite again in peace. While what forms the “I” is the desire of the other, it is violence according to Girard which forms the unity of culture, religion and political groups. “Culture comprises the misinterpretation of the killing of the surrogate victim that takes the form of prohibition, ritual, and myth.”\(^{52}\) These social bodies; culture, religion, ethnic and other groupings spring up in order to control violence.

### 2.2.2 The Single Victim Mechanism

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\(^{50}\) Robert Hamerton-Kelly argues that Girard uses the term “Surrogate Victim” to designate a spontaneous psychological mechanism by which we transfer violence to a victim. In a diachronic development of humankind it is the conflictual mimesis that happens when rivals converge no longer on the object that divides them but on the victim that unites them.

\(^{51}\) Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 25

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 28
In the life of a community a person comes to meet a lot of stumbling blocks to one’s desires creating a situation of conflict where unconsciously everyone blames everyone as the cause of the situation. This results into violence since desirers can no longer stand the scandals. The violence becomes so contagious that it ends up into Hobbesian “war of all against all.”

Girard argues that “the resulting violence of all against all would annihilate the community if it were not transformed, in the end, into a war of all against one, thanks to which the unity of the community is reestablished.” Consequently, the spiral of violence or this whole process which Girard calls ‘Satan’ becomes a way of life. If Satan has to sustain himself he has to sustain the community on whose life he depends. If the community is wiped away in a wave of violence on which violence feeds then Satan dies out. Therefore “every kingdom divided against itself will be laid to waste (Mt 12: 25), if Satan casts out Satan his kingdom will not stand. Therefore Satan from the beginning put in place a mechanism which will sustain the community and himself. This mechanism Girard calls the “scapegoat” or “single victim mechanism.” Girard argues that “when I use the term “mechanism,” as in ‘scapegoat mechanism,’ I mean basically and simply a generative principle which works unconsciously in culture and society. As Peter says, ‘And now, brothers, I know that you acted out of ignorance, as did your rulers… (Acts 3:17-19)” The point is that everyone is guilty but none is responsible for it.

In instances of violence the community cites a victim in whom all the scandals converge. Thus, the whole community descends on this single victim in blame as the cause of the entire

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53 René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, 8

54 Ibid., 24

55 René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, 266
catastrophe. Satan’s role is to accuse, inflame or snowball the entire community against a single victim who will have to be lynched or killed for peace to return to the community. Girard states:

Because our desires are mimetic, they resemble each other and cluster together in systems of opposition that are obstinate, sterile, and contagious. This is how scandals come to be. As they become fewer and bigger, scandals plunge communities into crises that are inflamed more and more. This inflammation reaches the crucial moment when unanimous convergence of the community against a single victim results in total scandal, the ‘abscess of fixation’ that pacifies the violence and puts together again the harmony that was torn apart.56

Satan fulfilling his role as the accuser, the Father of lies, a murderer from the beginning turns the crisis of violence of the whole community into violence against one victim who shoulders all the violence of the community by being sacrificed or expelled from the community.

He (Satan) is the accuser of the hero in the book of Job, before God and even more so before the people. In transforming a community of people with distinct identities and roles into hysterical mass, Satan produces myth and is the principle of systematic accusation that bursts forth from the contagious imitation provoked by scandals. Once the unfortunate victim is completely isolated, deprived of defenders, nothing can protect her or him from the aroused crowd. Everyone can set upon the victim without having to fear the least reprisal.57

What Satan does is to make the crowds unknowingly accomplices in the murder of an innocent victim. The crowds which in the first instance had no intention of being executioners are deceived by Satan not to see themselves as accomplices and to imagine themselves as alien to the violent murder they are to commit. Satan snowballs the community into hysterical anger and bloodthirstiness. Then, he lets loose the community as a pride of rabid lions to charge and tear to pieces an individual victim who is accused of all filth and as the source of all degeneration. It is only after this that there is presumably reconciliation in the community brought about by the murder. The greatest example of what we have said is after the condemnation and passion of Jesus, Luke’s Gospel reports the reconciliation between Herod and Pilate who were archenemies.

56 Ibid., 94
57 Ibid., 35
“And that same day Herod and Pilate became friends, for before this they had been enemies” (Luke 23:12). Jesus became the scapegoat of a political rivalry between the two rulers though this kind of reconciliation is usually violent and above all temporary.

The community again attains its tranquility by transferring the condemnation on the supposed cause of scandal, the victim, in the process rendering the violent community innocent. Mythology always takes sides with the unanimously violent community against the randomly chosen victim. Basing on mythology as we have argued above, the choice of the victim is dependent on the fact that the victim has no one to come to his/her defense or mourn for him/her. This is done in order to avoid reprisal from the family or group to which they belong. Therefore it is the nobodies, the homeless, those without family, the disabled and ill, abandoned old people who are marked for lynching. In classical Greek they used the nobodies as Pharmakoi, these were people selected to be sacrificial or ritual victims during the time of crisis to revert the calamity. Girard finds in “the Pharmakos a close relationship with the Pharmakon (pharmacy) which means both ‘antidote’ and ‘poison,’” depending on how it is used. Therefore the victim of sacrifice carries these two roles as poison to the community leading it into severe crisis but at the same time she/he is the antidote to the crisis through the ritual violence. The cause of violence expels violence; Satan expelling Satan. This victim becomes the antidote to the violence of the community because it is deemed to have pacifying and purifying efficacy. This purifying efficacy like in all ancient sacrifices satisfied two elements: “(1) to please the gods, who had prescribed them to the community, and (2) to consolidate or restore, if need be, the order and

58 René Girard, I See Satan Fall like Lightning, 37
peace of the community.” The entire institution of sacrifice in many ancient communities hanged on these two points.

The sacrifice of the randomly chosen victim serves to reproduce acts of violence in an exact manner deserved by the original perpetrator of an act of violence who is being substituted by the victim of unanimity. The gods are always invoked because of the tranquility that unanimous sacrificial violence has produced in the past and is capable of producing now. The reconciliation of the community renders the hand of the gods present in the sacrifice and hence making the victim of violence acquire a divine status. “In short it is always an effective “single victim mechanism” that works as model for the sacrifices, because it has really ended a mimetic crisis, an epidemic of multiple act of vengeance that the community could not control.”

It is certainly collective violence which inspired sacrifice regardless of all the variations which occurred in different communities. Sacrifice was actually conceived by many ancient communities as “good violence” because it was a kind of violence that ended violence rather than escalating it because of its unanimous character. It is the unanimous agreement to commit murder evident in sacrifices offered in primitive religions that washes clean the hands of individuals who take part in sacrificial violence.

From sacrifice religion is born because the victim of unanimity who was in the first place the cause of crisis becomes the source of reconciliation which can only be brought about by a divine personality. It is only a god that has power to cause crisis and to reconcile a community in crisis. Although religion is born through the repetition of the reconciling murders of the past which ended the mimetic crisis, religion itself enhances this whole process by repeating it, at

59 Ibid., 78
60 Ibid., 79
each time disguising the violence done to the victim by calling the sacrificed victim sacred. Religion uses violence (violence to the sacrificial victim) in order to stop violence. Satan survives on this continued action of religion. The Sacralization of the scapegoat is an unintended outcome of the identifying and finally the lynching of the victim. For Girard religion in culture has an important function to bury the original acts of violence against the victim. In Genesis it is expressed by Cain’s cover up of Abel’s murder which comes as a result of Cain’s desire to have the being of Abel and what Abel had from God. “We should envisage the possibility that all human institutions, and therefore humanity itself, are rooted in sacrifice. Humanity springs forth from religion, i.e., from the founding murders (anyone killed not as retaliatory act, Abel…Jesus) and the rituals that spring from them.”⁶¹ The true source of culture is located in the violence endemic to mimesis itself.

This led Girard to argue for a ‘non-sacrificial’⁶² reading of the death of Jesus Christ, a position that dissatisfied many exegetes because there was no way that the death of Jesus Christ could not be understood in sacrificial terms. In his Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, Girard categorically spurns the idea of understanding the death of Christ and reading the gospels in a sacrificial manner because in his view the gospels are aimed at unveiling the lie of the scapegoat mechanism on which sacrifice is built. This led him to deny all allusions to Christ’s death as another sacrifice. A position he has reconsidered in his interview with James Williams recorded in The Girard Reader. He answers Williams’ question on his position on non-sacrificial reading of the Gospel by saying, “I have come to be more positive about the word ‘sacrificial,’ so I would like first of all to make a distinction between sacrifice as murder and

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⁶¹ Ibid., 93
⁶² René Girard, Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World, 180
Sacrifice as renunciation is a movement toward freedom from mimesis as potentially acquisitive and rivalry. Girard here acknowledges Schwager’s critique as the most sober one. Schwager argues that Girard’s non-sacrificial interpretation of the gospels is justified on the pretext that Christ’s death is different from the sacrifices in the context of primitive societies. “Christ’s self-offering has nothing in common with that process whereby those sacrificing unconsciously offload their collective aggression onto some victim... the new meaning of sacrifice emerged above all in the course of the Old Testament, the notion of sacrifice was progressively linked to the idea of obedience (Gen. 22:1-19; Sam 15:22; Is 1:11-17). It is founded on the obedience of the Son to the Father in the Spirit, in their eternal self-emptying love, on solidarity with the victims of sin and evil whom Christ substitutes and does not want to leave isolated and abandoned by God. Girard concludes his long project of unveiling the mechanisms of the culture of death by positing that the Bible especially the gospels expose the false mystification of the scapegoat mechanism.

2.2.3 The Biblical Revelation of the Lie of Violence

We shall begin the considerations of biblical revelation of the lie of violence inherent in covetousness by Girard’s response to an interview about 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers. Secondly, we shall turn to what we hinted on above; the contribution of Nietzsche as regards Christian concern for the victim. In the interview on the terrible terrorist act of violence in recent years, Girard repeats verbatim the main thesis of all his work that “scapegoating comes from a cultural mechanism and is not approved by God.” Secondly, that violence is connected to

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63 René Girard, The Girard Reader, 272

64 Raymond Schwager, “Christ’s Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice,” in Semeia, No. 33, 1985, 120

65 René Girard, The Girard Reader, 266
desire which by its nature is mimetic, acquisitive and rivalry. He sees the error of our times in the failure to recognize this.

The error is always to reason within categories of ‘difference’ when the root of all conflict is rather ‘competition,’ mimetic rivalry between persons, countries, cultures. Competition is the desire to imitate the other in order to obtain the same thing he or she has, by violence if need be. No doubt terrorism is bound to a world ‘different’ from ours, but what gives rise to terrorism does not lie in that ‘difference’ which removes it further from us and make it inconceivable to us. On the contrary, it lies in the exacerbated desire for convergence and resemblance. Human relations are essentially relations of imitation, of rivalry. What is experienced now is a form of mimetic rivalry on a planetary scale.66

It is important to note that the father of violence is not difference but the desire for convergence and resemblance. When the gap between the disciple and the master or subject and mediator diminishes then mimetic rivalry exacerbates. Moreover, convergence and resemblance are the source of violence because once this point is reached the object of desire is even forgotten leaving the mediator and the imitator to clash into a bloody fight with one another since the object of desire that kept them apart is removed.

In the lines above we have argued that hominization develops with the presence of the object of desire which is outside the desirer, then, the removal of the object leaves the model exposed to the disciple hence susceptible to attack. The naivety of the nations attacked by terrorists is that, they, being models forget that they have indicated to the imitators the object of desire and at the same time they have prevented the imitators from acquiring them. They have given these terrorists expectations of acquiring their object of desire but at the same time they have acted in a way that says do not appropriate my object. The model and the imitator converge on the object making their desires resemble with each other’s as the model jealously guards the same object desired by the disciple. It is important here not to lose sight of two elements leading

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66 Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 22
to violence or the clash between the model and disciple: resemblance and convergence. It is for this that Nietzsche finds Christianity defective as it propagates the equality of all human beings before God.

Nietzsche is very important in his thunderous critique of Christian religion. Gil Bailie captures the resentment of Nietzsche toward Christianity in one of Nietzsche’s bomb blast remarks: “I raise against the Christian Church the most terrible of all accusations that any accuser ever uttered… The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its corruption… The ‘equality of souls before God,’ this falsehood, this pretext for rancor of all the base-minded, this explosive of a concept which eventually became revolution, modern idea, and the principle of decline of the order of society.”⁶⁷ At the foundation of Nietzsche’s argumentation lies his belief that resemblance and convergence (equality of all human beings before God) are unhealthy for human development. Human beings are not equal and thus being the case the weak should be sacrificed, if need be, for the advancement of the society because it is on this sacrifice that development depends. Christianity has taught that all human beings are equal before God and has also tried to form our conscience with its slave moral demands to believe that this is true. For Nietzsche this is a self-defeating mentality because it robs us of the aspiration to absolute power, if all people are equal, the theme expressed in his *Will to Power* although this power is not only about domination but fulfillment. The weakness of Christianity for Nietzsche is that it is for him a religion of pity. Nietzsche believed that pity stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality. Pity deprives us of strength because we turn to put on the person of the weak we feel for. For him it is atrocious that Christianity has made pity a virtue. Nietzsche believes that the promotion of the notion of the equality of the human soul before God is

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⁶⁷ Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads*, 26
revolutionary because it annihilates differences and promotes resemblance and convergence of the weak and the strong. The consequence in Nietzsche's view will be that the weak will be a defining category leading all the strong to be slaves like the weak. Christianity reverses the traditional scenario because it takes sides with the weak, the victims, the *Pharmakoi*.

Girard praises Nietzsche for this discovery which no thinker before him had ever articulated so well though self-evident as it is. Girard sees in Nietzsche the first realization that since the foundation of the world, violence and sacrificial violence formed the culture of every human community. What Christian conscience does is to make weakness or the weak who are supposed to be sacrificed, not the strong, become an important entity by taking sides with them. Nietzsche abhors Christianity for its concern for the weak or the victims of violence. Girard argues that Hitler’s genocide of the Jews makes much sense if it is viewed as an attempt by this bloodthirsty leader to root out from Germany, Europe and indeed the whole world the Christian call to side with the victims. Nazism found in Nietzsche the anthropological key to obliterate the concern for the victim which the Bible so proclaimed. Nietzsche argued vehemently that the collective violence in myth (Dionysian passion) and rituals are synonymous with the violence experienced in the (passion) suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Although these two acts of violence are similar in all the details, the interpretation given to each of them is what differs greatly. In the first, the Dionysian passion, the multitude is presented as being on the righteous side lynching the cause of dissention who eventually becomes the antidote to the crisis in the community. Conversely, in the passion of Jesus the interpretation reverses the position of the righteous; it is no longer the community that commands sympathy but the victim who is actually the innocent sufferer.
Consequently, we can argue that Girard’s thesis in this consideration of biblical revelation is: “myths are based on a unanimous persecution; Judaism and Christianity destroy this unanimity in order to defend the victim unjustly condemned and to condemn the executioners unjustly legitimated.”\(^6^8\) Nietzsche’s discovery comes immediately before his madness; his whole project which justified human sacrifice comes to haunt him such that he could not do but breakdown. Nietzsche after this discovery “becomes delirious. Rather than recognizing the reversal of the mythic scheme as an indispensable truth that only Judaism and Christianity proclaim, Nietzsche does all he can to discredit the Christian awareness that this type of victim is innocent.”\(^6^9\) The problem of Nietzsche argues Girard, is his inability to admit that the unanimity in myth is a consequence of the mimetic contagion which seizes the executioners, and that they are ignorant of its presence which has only been revealed by the Bible and more prominently by the gospels. To conclude this section let us employ Girard’s own assessment of Nietzsche in his discovery. “Since Nietzsche is blind to mimetic rivalry and its contagion, he doesn’t see that the Gospel stance toward victims does not come from prejudice in favor of the weak against the strong but is heroic resistance to violent contagion.”\(^7^0\)

### 2.2.3a Satan the Father of Lies

The Bible (both the Old Testament and the gospels) reveals to us that all human beings are terrible scapegoaters and rivalrous imitators (Gen. 3:1-7; Lev. 16: 5-10; Ex. 20: 17-20; Jn. 8: 1-8; 8:30-44). It is only through God’s action in Jesus Christ that things can be different because he has revealed the mimetic character, the covetousness, and the rivalry of all human desires.

\(^{6^8}\) René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, 172

\(^{6^9}\) Ibid., 172

\(^{7^0}\) Ibid., 173
The tenth commandment and the gospel of John chapter eight demonstrate how the Bible reveals the lie of Satan. Girard argues that we can find a summary of the mimetic anthropology of the synoptic gospels made manifest in the attitudes of the Pharisees and scribes (Mt 23:13, hypocrites, Mt 23:29-33 children of the murderers of the prophets, working to complete their ancestor’s work, people of hard hearts like those in the parable of the evil vine-growers Mk 12:1-12). All this is condensed in a conversation between Jesus and his Jewish opponents in the fourth gospel (Jn 8:30-44). In a pericope of only fifteen verses John defines anew the consequences of rivalistic imitation.

Jesus challenges his opponents who think that they are children of Abraham, and hence God alone is their father. Jesus argues that their behavior evidently portrays who their father is, Satan.

Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:42-44).

Schwager sums up the accusation Jesus makes against his opponents in three distinct elements found in the text. “Their self-interpretation is false, because 1) they have a satanic spirit, with its tendencies 2) to murder, and 3) to lie.”71 John sums up the synoptic gospels where Jesus always pointed to the actions of the Pharisees as hypocritical and vehemently charged them as the sons of the murderers of the prophets, and builders of the tombs of the prophets as if they disapprove their fathers’ deeds, by arguing that they are from their father the devil. All they do is to disguise who they are, murderers themselves.

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71 Raymond Schwager, “Christ’s Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice,” 114
Schwager makes a connection between the actions of the Jews and Cain who murdered his brother Abel as acts in imitation of Satan, murderer from the beginning. “The Jews are dominated by a very specific basic principle impulse: Satan’s spirit, a murderous spirit. The formulation ‘murderer from the beginning’ could very well be an allusion to the murder of Abel. Jesus bears witness to the Jews that they are possessed by the same spirit as Cain was. They are in no way better than the first murderer.” John sharpens this accusation in its three forms by saying they do the desire of their father which is to lie and to murder. In the synoptic gospels Jesus is accused of blasphemy (Mk 14:16), in John the opponents level the same accusation against Jesus even in a more radical way. “Merely a man, he had made himself out to be God (Jn 10:33; 19:7), something which is an essential characteristic of Satan. Now all is applied to him, all that he had uncovered in his opponents. He had shown their sin to be due to 1) their satanic spirit, 2) in lying, 3) and murder, and he himself is accused of 1) having a satanic spirit, 2) he is condemned by the lies of perjured witnesses, and 3) violently executed.” In this analysis God and Satan are two arch-models, with Satan as of a treacherous spirit, a model of deception, and murderous intentions.

Girard draws from ethnological and anthropological analyses all these three elements in a phrase, “scapegoat Mechanism.” In the final analysis it is established in Girard that Jesus is condemned and executed as a scapegoat. However, Schwager makes an intriguing remark about any reference to Jesus as a scapegoat. He says:

In contrast to the purely sociological mechanism, there is in what happens to Jesus a universal process at work, which is directed not against some accidental victim, but intentionally against

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72 Raymund Schwager, *Must there be Scapegoats: Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, 158

73 Raymund Schwager, “Christ’s Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice,” 115
one who proclaims a God of unconditional love of the enemies, and against one who in a unique way understands himself as a Son of God the Father. As such he does not allow himself to be integrated into his opponents’ system of lies and to be interiorly conquered by them. He can no longer be sacralized, but must be “satanized,” and so is able to fully reveal his hidden truth at Easter.\textsuperscript{74}

Schwager makes an important point here because what Jesus reveals is more than merely sociological, it is ontological. Jesus unveils not only the sociological mechanism of repudiating violence but more than this he reveals his ontological relation with the Father in the Spirit, a relationship of love. We will return to this point at a proper time.

From the Old Testament perspective, Girard argues that the story of the Fall in Genesis and the second half of the Ten Commandments prohibit violence against the neighbor. The commands are you shall not: kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against your neighbor. All these commands are directed to the property of the neighbor but the tenth commandment prohibits not simply acts against the neighbor but desire itself. “You shall not covet the house of your neighbor. You shall not covet the wife of your neighbor, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox or ass, nor anything that belongs to him” (Exod. 20: 17). Girard says, “the Hebrew term translated as ‘covet’ means just simply ‘desire.’ This is the word that designates the desire of Eve for the prohibited fruit, the desire leading to the original sin."\textsuperscript{75} In the story of the Fall we recognize the trajectory which desire takes: “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate” (Gen. 3:4-6). In a single moment the contagiousness of

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 116

\textsuperscript{75} René Girard, \textit{I See Satan Fall like Lightning}, 8
mimetic desire made the tree become good for food, delightful to the eyes, desirable for its possibility to bequeath wisdom and above all its ability to make them gods. This is all because God was now rendered a rival who did not want Eve and Adam to appropriate what God enjoyed. This is why in (Exod. 20:17) it is simply desire that is prohibited in the command. The word ‘covet’ for Girard should be understood simply as ‘desire’ with no other ideas of a perverse longing which surround this notion in modern reading of the term. The whole argument here is that desire for the neighbor’s property is the most common thing and if it was not forbidden, then in every community there would have been war of all against all because of the other.

The state of affairs is that humans desire what others have or are or what others desire. Therefore human rivalry lies at the heart of most human relationship such that forbidding desire for the things and indeed the person of the neighbor prevents internal violence. The neighbor is important because it is the neighbor’s things or desires that are desired. The things and the desires of the neighbor can pass away but the neighbor doesn’t, making his/her presence the source of desire. It is for this that the tenth commandment in the final analysis turns to the neighbor who endures rather than things which pass. “Since the objects we should not desire and nevertheless do desire always belong to the neighbor, it is clearly the neighbor who renders them desirable. In the formulation of the prohibition, the neighbor must take the place of the object, and indeed he does take their place in the last phrase of the sentence that prohibits no longer objects enumerated one by one (wife, slave, ox or ass) but ‘anything that belongs to him (the neighbor).’”76 Here the tenth commandment unveils what we have already treated at length that it is the neighbor who is the model of our desires.

76 Ibid., 9
Desire leads to idolization of the neighbor, the sin of Adam and Eve who idolized God by desiring to be gods. This was Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling’s (1775-1854) mistake when he thought of God as an idolized (idealized) self because he looked at God as model of his desire to becoming an actualized human being. Therefore the tenth commandment is the completion or the explanation of the first commandment which forbids worshiping other gods because idolatry is based on mimetic desire. Through mimetic desire you render divine the neighbor whom you unconsciously worship and whom you must eventually destroy if you are to be as he/she is. The Bible is a reverse of the violent mimetic contagion because its goal is that we might become the image of Christ whose only desire is not to do his own will but to desire the Father’s pure desire. Jesus is the perfect imitator of the Father who “makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (Mt 5: 45). This shows us another way of imitation because it is directed by mutual self-emptying love for the other, not rivalry. For God prefers mercy to sacrifice. Unconditional love is the nature of God and it is the original object and form of imitation, distorted by the father of lies. So, we can conclude that “the best way of preventing violence does not consist in forbidding objects, or even rivalristic desire, as the tenth commandment does, but in offering to people the model that will protect them from mimetic rivalries rather than involving them in these rivalries.”77 Christ, the manifestation of God in flesh is such a model of the nonviolent contagion, the contagion of love.

2.3 HUMAN IDENTITY AS CONSTITUTED BY THE OTHER

We have up to this far outlined the two axes on which Girard’s mimetic anthropology oscillates. The first axis is that human desire is mimetic by all means, but human beings will

77 Ibid., 14
always try to deny that they are copyists of other people’s desires who become for them both models and rivals. The second axis is that rivalry is always connected with desire. Grasping at glory, human beings will always make their models into rivals and the same rivalry intensifies their desire for what is legitimately another person’s desire. Consequently, war ensues when this other person tries to resist the attempt by the other to appropriate his/her desire as his/her own. What desire does is that it begets the “self” and brings the “self” into existence. Therefore the self is a product of other people’s desires, those who preceded the self. Unfortunately, desires wounded by mimetic acquisitiveness and rivalry created by human sin will always produce wounded ‘selves’ who are participating in the larger community of victim-creators. They share in the universal complicity of victim-creators.

What Girard articulates very well about these two axes is that the formation of the self and the formation of humanity take the same process, they are other oriented. For Girard at the genesis of this process of coming into being of the self and humanity is violence. Moreover, “the violent distorted other” will always form “a violent distorted self.” Girard sees in Jesus’ words, “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires” (Jn 8:43-44), the truth is that the opponents of Jesus are formed by Satan whom they imitate. Therefore Satan forms, liars, murderers and violent “selves.” Jesus’ opponents cannot accept the truth because they are constituted by their father, the devil, whom they try to deny as their father. In the same vein Alison states:

In this way, we can say that every human being is, in fact, constituted by and with an in-built relationality to the other which formed him or her. This other constituted the very possibility of human desire. We can also say that owing to the way in which we are in fact constituted, that desire is rivalistic and builds identity, to a greater or lesser extent, by denial of the alterity, and the anteriority, of the other desire. That is to say, human desire, as we know it, works by grasping and appropriating being rather than receiving it. In this sense, we are always already locked into
the other which forms us in a relationship of acquisitive mimesis, that is, a relationship of violence which spring from, and leads to death.\textsuperscript{78}

The question then is: are we completely damned since we cannot escape the influence of the distorted other; the model, the community and other social bodies?

It is here that we find Alison’s work, \textit{The Joy of Being Wrong}, a very important resource because in that work he recognizes the role played by everyone in creating victims of violence. Human relationships founded on violent mimetic contagion will always beget violence. The transformation of the self can be a reality only if we recognize ourselves to be wrong and hence transform our relationships with the other who is the genesis of all our desires. Alison postulates an anthropology of grace since through grace God relates to human beings lovingly, freely without any need of a payback check and generously because this relation is completely undeserved and unexpected. Alison argues that “the great anthropological transformation, therefore, is of the way in which we move from being constituted by an anterior desire which moves us into deadlock, by grasping and appropriating our sense of being, to being constituted by a self-giving other that can be received only as a constantly and perpetually self-giving, as gratuitous, and therefore never grasped, never appropriated, but only received and shared.”\textsuperscript{79} In this regard we are completely incapable of stopping violence in our world without God’s generous intervention in his Son who must become our constitutive alterity without whom we are bound to continue existing by the norms set by the wounded other; the one through whom scandals must occur, the father of lies, and murderer from the beginning.

\textsuperscript{78} James Alison, \textit{The Joy of Being Wrong}, 44

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 45
This anthropology makes us aware of the gift given undeservedly, freely and in ungrasping manner, such a gift will always demand our response, at least our disposition to be able to receive it. God has done and revealed gratuitousness in presenting to humanity a new ‘Other’ who springs out from a completely non-rivalrous relationship. This other has lived in our midst and we have seen his glory as a self-giving and forgiving victim. “This self-giving victim, from outside human mimetic rivalry, revealed precisely that the death-locked lie of mimetic rivalry flowing from culture’s hidden victims is not the original mode of desire, but a distortion of it.”

The original mode of desire is the self-emptying reciprocal love between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Although Girard does not emphasize the Trinity here because the idea of a trinitarian God seems to be a return to mythological polytheism, a problem which dissatisfied the modern world, we shall make it our central theme as it proclaims a relational God, who is a pure relation of love. Unfortunately, in that fear of the modern critique, Girard may have taken lightly the contribution of the roles of Father and the Holy Spirit that makes Jesus a scapegoat different from all other scapegoats. Jesus is a scapegoat who says of himself, ‘My Father is at work until now, so I am at work… I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me’ (Jn 5:17, 30). The consequence of losing sight of the Trinity is that we can easily fall into a trap of Christomonism where the event of salvation is only understood in the context of substitution of sinners for Jesus, relegating to periphery the involvement of the Spirit and the Father in the work of Jesus. We will come back to this point because it is essential for the second chapter as we come to appreciate the contribution of Hans Urs von Balthasar who sees the death of Jesus more than just a

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Ibid., 44
substitution but also a sacrifice and a representation or solidarity with the victims of sin (with violence as one of its manifestation) in their death and perdition. In this way the work of Christ is given an ontological character drawn from his relationship with the Father in the Spirit.

Satan is the father of the distortion of the original mode of desire as opposed to Jesus, the self-giving other. The self-giving ‘Other’ is the constitutive element of the human “self” because he is God’s own self-communication. Michael Kirwan paraphrases this in relation to Karl Rahner’s anthropology as he argues that:

It is this reality which Karl Rahner seeks to express in his description of the human being as ‘the event of the absolute, free and forgiving self-communication of God.’ This formula conveys the truth of humanity’s openness to transcendence in our intellectual and affective strivings toward the infinite, so that God has already communicated God’s self as an inner constitutive element of every human being… meaning that we always already exist in the context of our intimate relationship to God. There never has been a state of pure nature, a neutral zone.\(^\text{81}\)

Both Kirwan and Alison recognize in Rahner’s formulation a brilliant correction of the distortion that looked at nature separated from grace. However, Alison argues that it is the self-giving other the opposite of the father of lies and social other which formed us who can transform us into the self he is, a self-giving, forgiving and non-rivalrous other. This is so, because this other has done so concretely in space and time. It is here that Alison finds Rahner’s formulation unfulfilling. The transcendental relation to God would easily take for granted how a human being stands before God while relegating to the periphery how he/she stands in front of world catastrophe like Auschwitz, Rwanda genocide and Darfurian bloodbaths.

Alison argues that “the transformation of our ‘self’ via our constitutive alterity happens not through some universal transcendence, but exactly through the givenness of certain particular historical actions and signs, moving us to produce and reproduce just such historical acts and

\(^{81}\) Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, (New York, T&T Clark, 2009), 53
It is in this vein of thinking that we find Johann Baptist Metz and others who think that it is not enough to postulate that human desire for transcendence is simply a desire for God without paying attention to its distortion. Kirwan, quoting William Blake, declares that “man must and will have some Religion; if he has not the religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan; deprived of God, humans do not simply diminish or shrink into robotic existence, or an animal spontaneity. They turn instead towards false messiahs and false transcendences, in search of the nouminosity which will transform the emptiness within – with catastrophic results.” Here lies the search of a new consideration which responds to human characteristics in the concrete circumstances of world history. It is here that the mimetic theory plays a very important role. Since by nature we imitate others, we shall always need a model. However we need a non-grasping and loving one who unveils the lie of imitating acquisitively and rivalry.

Alison argues that mimetic anthropology helps us to:

Acknowledging that this desire, good in itself, may be misdirected and distorted. If our desire focuses on an object other than God, and if we desire in a grasping manner, rather than reciprocating God’s gratuitous love, then that desire is being lived as idolatry, a complete missing the point…. By contrast, Rahnerian transcendental anthropology effectively pre-pardons idolatry without transforming the idolater, without giving him/her a chance of a real restructuring of the heart. A mimetic anthropology is a continuous struggle and a discovery of human beings as they are inserted in the world such that it will not fail to take notice of the ugly face of being in the world, that is all forms of violence that take our world hostage. Alison instead proposes wisdom anthropology or anthropology of conversion because at the heart of it is the discovery of a completely different other who puts a stop to violent mimetic contagion. In other words, he

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82 James Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 44

83 Michael Kirwan, Girard and Theology, 56

84 James Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 54
formulates an anthropology of revelation, with Jesus the revealer on one hand, and his disciples making a discovery of this new loving other, on the other. Jesus is the other who revealed a new perspective of otherness and introduced to his disciples the possibility of living in imitation of this other whose desire is not acquisitive and rivalry in nature. Jesus in his death leading to the resurrection revealed to his disciples the image of God as a victim of violence. This image of God as a victim of violence repels anyone who wants to appropriate and manipulate it because the image of God as a victim of human violence threatens the stability and security of the human ‘self.’

2.3.1 Complicity in creating victims

It is wisdom anthropology because the beauty of the otherness of this “other” is only revealed at the point when he is being driven out, lynched and executed on the Cross. It is important because “if God is the human victim, this means that access to God is available not only in the particular racial or cultural group (Jews and disciples) that made the discovery possible, but universally true wherever the human ‘self’ is formed by victimization, at individual and group levels. That means everywhere.”85 This anthropology is really appropriate for understanding the human being in a violent world. For Alison this realization can only rightly be termed as “subversion from within” or conversion. “Mimetic anthropology is par excellence an anthropology of conversion. The transformation of a moi-du-désir (self of desire) via a transformation of alterity has to do precisely with the changing of heart implied in the word cor-vertere… to live on the interface between the old other which formed us and the new other

85 James Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 58
which seeks to form us anew, is intrinsically related to conversion."\textsuperscript{86} This conversion of heart can only be achieved through the recognition of our universal complicity in violence and its contagion. Therefore “the conversion works as we recognize our complicity in creating victims, cease to regard ourselves as a victim, and begin to see ourselves as co-victimizers.”\textsuperscript{87} The realization that “all have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23) is a powerful reversal of mimetic snowballing that comes with our denial of being victimizers.

This invites us to a new paradigm which dissuades us from holding on to our claims of being the innocent and victimized. It calls to our memory the story of the woman caught in the act of committing adultery and in her presence we can hear the words of Jesus resound again in our ears: “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (Jn. 8:7). The realization that we have all sinned smiles at us, arousing in us the Angels of mercy and the Angels of light whispering to our ears, “you cannot cast the first stone.” Susan Ashton in her song, Better Angels of Our Nature has this captured so poetically. “He fell to his knees and he cried out for mercy, heart-felt confessionals to an angry mob, but vengeance was theirs as they bellowed for justice, ‘death to the man who has sinned against God.’ I joined in the chant feeling so high and mighty, pointing the finger from up on my throne, until I looked in his tears and I caught my reflection, and knew that I could not cast the first stone.”\textsuperscript{88} The better Angels of our nature have been shown by Jesus that it is through compassion, mercy and love that we can challenge the angry mob to come to the realization that they are not without sin.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 62
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 62
\textsuperscript{88} Susan Ashton, Angels of Mercy, 1990
Taking up the new other in conversion definitely renders us vulnerable to even more victimization; offering the left cheek once struck on the right, we are actually destined to the Cross. Let us conclude the anthropology of conversion in Alison’s own words:

This is a first step toward learning how to create concrete acts of solidarity with our own and other’s victims, even though, as we will discover, this increases the likelihood of ourselves being victimized. In the concrete circumstances of humanity, what the new unity of humanity looks like is the beginning of the gathering of penitent persecutors around the body of the self-giving victim, whose forgiveness made their new perception possible, and the creating of acts of worship of the victim, both in celebration and in acts of fraternal service.  

Anthropology of conversion first and foremost opens us to the reality that we are accomplices in violence or sin. It invites us to mercy and solidarity with the victims of violence and sin because in their sin and humiliation our own being co-victimizers and sinners reflect back to us as in a mirror. Once this form of wisdom is attained we can no longer exalt ourselves but humble ourselves by acknowledging that we are also in need of God’s mercy.

2.4 KENOTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Looking at God’s action in Jesus, Alison’s anthropology of conversion must be complemented by an “anthropology of kenosis.” It is in the kenosis of God that the truth of a completely non-rivalristic mimesis storms the world concretely in the Cross. Jesus’ utterance that “Amen, amen I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing; for what he does, his son will do also” (John 5:19), invites us to see the self-emptying and forgiving stance Jesus takes in his life as a concretization in history of the eternal event of self-emptying love in the Godhead. The desire of Jesus is to do his Father’s desire without grasping at the identity of the Father. What Jesus does is to imitate the Father in his work but without obliterating the Father’s being in order to assert his position although this is his true identity,
divinity. Here rests the kenotic anthropology we seek to develop in the last section of this chapter.

We propose Kenotic Anthropology because it is a reflection on the triune God’s self-emptying and forgiving love. This is very important for the people suffering in our world today, especially suffering from the brutality of violence, war and murder everywhere. Kenotic anthropology challenges us not to look at Christology exclusively independent of the trinitarian nature of God. It makes us argue for a position that looks at kenosis as an intrinsic category of the nature of God. This can only be summed up in the realization which John records in his first letter that “God is Love” (1 Jn. 4:8). John exhorts his community to love because love is the nature of God. “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him (1 Jn. 4:7-9). John of Damascus makes a very interesting argument towards the understanding of God as love in the divine Trinity. He envisions the Godhead as a dynamic act of divine love. In his Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, he developed a clear understanding of the doctrine of Perichoresis arguing that since all three divine Persons possess the one infinite being of God, they must mutually penetrate and indwell each other wholly in mutual self-giving love. The consequence of this understanding is that we cannot conceive of the work of Jesus Christ which entails his appearance on earth in creaturely form, suffering, more particularly the Cross and his eventual lordship without reference to an eternal, dynamic and loving relationship within the Godhead.

Lucien Richard points out that “Christianity proclaims that in Jesus Christ the meaning for which all human beings strive has been attained in history, that unless one is human as Christ
was human one cannot be human at all.”90 This is so because in Jesus Christ the revelation of God and humanity is coterminous. The essence of Christianity is to make human beings to be formed into the likeness of the God-human, Jesus Christ. What makes Jesus Christ a worthwhile model is his self-emptying love for others. Paul in his exhortation to the Philippians brings to the fore this aspect.

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus. Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2: 5-11).

Jesus is the true revelation of humanity because his “kenosis is the revelation of that which constitutes a person’s deepest nature, love surpassing itself and emptying itself.”91 Jesus Christ is the archetype of humanity because through him the limitless possibilities of human existence are revealed. A number of scholars have argued that what Paul is doing in the above text is to posit the preexistence of Christ on one hand and on the other some argue that Paul is comparing the attitudes of Christ and Adam. Christ is the obedient and ungrasping New Adam in contrast to the disobedient and grasping Old Adam. The Philippians are invited to imitate the mind and attitude of Jesus who is reckoned Lord because of his self-emptying by being found in human form or in the form of a slave. The Old Adam missed the mark because of his striving for divinity while Jesus the New Adam accepted creatureliness and embraced it fully to its logical consequences, the Cross, because of his loving relationship with the Father.

90 Lucien Richard, Christ the Self-Emptying of God, (New York, Paulist Press, 1997), 162
91 Ibid., 163
The second aspect of kenotic anthropology is relationality that is involved in being human. Balthasar shows that true humanness is relational such that an individual human being is constituted as one in the encounter with the other. The first encounter between Adam and Eve which constitute their personhood implies an unconditional invitation to acknowledge the presence of the other who has the dignity and integrity as one’s own. A danger to relationality comes with human desire for resemblance and convergence which tries to obliterate the difference through grasping at what is not our own. It is important here to note that sameness has its repercussions like rejection of creaturehood.

To reject creaturehood is to reject dependence upon other creatures and God, to seek to escape the very conditions that make existence and continuous creation possible. In a traditional religious sense to deny creaturehood is to deny relationship to an ultimate or absolute source. At the same time, humility of creaturehood is sharpened by the realization of ultimate dependence on God through creatures. If it is relationship that constitutes a person, then to accept lowliness which is a limitation can be an opportunity for greatness. The acknowledgment that all we are is received from others should be humbling and fill our hearts with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the fruit of living out our relationship to others in an ungrasping way, not usurping or in mimetic antagonism but only in understanding that all we have and are is a gift of love. Jesus shows us through his ungrasping, the true nature of human beings in a kenotic way. That is we have to rid humanity of acquisitive and rivalry desire which is the foundation of the world ruled and sustained by the culture of violence and death.

Kenotic anthropology is an anthropology of self-emptying love which does not blow the ego out of proportion which is the error of Descartes and Kant with their followers. They posited the thinking self at the expense of other aspects of what it means to be human. Whether humans

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92 Ibid., 165
are sentient or desirous or constituted that does not appear evidently in Descartes’ notion of a human being because these including other humans could just be mere imaginations in sleep.

On the contrary, the anthropology we are formulating is a relational anthropology that understands that “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”\textsuperscript{93} Lucien Richard is right to think of kenotic anthropology in this similar manner:

\begin{quote}
(It) will focus on the constitutive nature of self-emptying love. Such an anthropology will avoid the idea of a self-positing ego and the error of the radically autonomous subject. The genesis of the self will occur in encounter mediated by a linguistic world. The genesis of the human self will be characterized by exocentricity. Unlike previous idealistic anthropologies, kenotic approach does not take the fact of self-reflection as the original given of human subjectivity but understands human subjectivity as a consequence of becoming. The human being as self-conscious ego is constituted through a relation to “the other.”\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

We envisage a kenotic anthropology because of its ability to be in touch with the reality of the other and the historical events of our world than basing anthropology on the ‘self in reflection.’ The “self in reflection” risks the genuine knowledge of the world by isolating it into his/her contemplation, apperception, imagination and above all that the self in reflection falls to the temptation of standing aloof only as a spectator to whatever is outside the thinking self. The thinking self in itself will not render the other only as the object of reflection but it will be challenged to grow and face the real world where violence and death are the order of the day.

In addition kenotic anthropology is an anthropology of action. It is primarily the action of self-giving and forgiving love because the self is always in relation to others not only as a thinking mind but also as an acting being. It is an anthropology of forgiving love because among

\textsuperscript{93} John S. Mbiti, \textit{African Religions and Philosophy}, (London, Longmann, 1969), 108: Mbiti an African philosopher and theologian argues that in African context there is no “I” unrelated to the “we” or a self-positing ego that thinks of others as an illusions in sleep. Mbiti is saying that self-reflection is not the original given human subjectivity but rather human beings become what they are through the relationships within the social body on one hand and on the other they also give back what they are to the society.

\textsuperscript{94} Lucien Richard, \textit{Christ the Self-Emptying of God}, 165
the others to whom we pour our hearts in serves are those we considered enemies or rather those who hurt us. It is for this that to love our neighbor is to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:40). “This is the ultimate truth: God has been one’s neighbor. In the kenotic life, everyone is our neighbor, whoever happens to be at hand, unconditionally, without discrimination. This is why kenotic love involves the enemy.” Moreover kenotic love is to exist without superiority or inferiority in a relationship but to exist in a relationship of interdependence where force and difference in status is not the determining factor but mutuality which tries to outdo the other in showing love (Rom 12:10). Mutuality is the determining factor because everyone has a contribution to make to us and we have a contribution to make to everyone.

Finally, we are formulating an anthropology of suffering and of the suffering of our world who do not deserve suffering. Suffering comes in from self-renunciation for the sake of the neighbor. The form of suffering we are talking about here is not imposed suffering onto people but it is one that comes from human freedom. When a human being freely chooses to love, suffering comes as a price one pays for loving. The importance of this type of suffering is that it fulfills two important roles namely, that we are limited selves on one hand, and on the other, we acknowledge ‘the other’ as other. This form of suffering reveals to us that the knowledge of ourselves can no longer be egocentric but that the suffering other reveals us to us. The Cross of Christ reveals to us that his life in suffering was an acceptance of the other as other not just for his advantage but because of his radical self-emptying or non-grasping love. Jesus Christ is rooted in the inter-trinitarian self-emptying love. This is the reason why God enters into solidarity with those who suffer the consequences of sin, violence and death in the world.

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95 Lucien Richard, *Christ the Self-Emptying of God*, 171
2.5 CONCLUSION

In a discussion about existence in a violent world it is important to acknowledge three inseparable elements. We need to look at violence in its cultural, structural and eventual or direct aspects as we have posited already in our analysis of violence. In its cultural aspect violence is institutionalized, one form of violence used to stop another form of violence. This way of existence only makes violence the determining category of human relationships. Structurally, mimesis is an important category because in its goodness it is the source of sociogenesis, individuation and love. On the contrary, if mimesis falls into the hands of Satan, the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning and the accuser the result is tearing up one another. Satan wants all people to imitate him and so he disguises his nature to lie, murder and all the demeaning structures inherent in his role as the accuser of the innocent. It is through him that scandal must occur. The mounting scandals he causes are manifested in direct events of abuse, injury, dehumanization, and even murder. This being the case, we have proposed a new model that propagates non-violence even in the face of his executioners. He is always in solidarity with all the victims of violence and sin everywhere. By so doing he revealed that mimetic antagonism is a lie from Satan. Jesus is the mediator and true model of what it means to be human beings because he embodies the Father’s eternal loving plan revealed in the paschal mystery.

Finally, let us make three assertions which are very important for the anthropology of kenosis. The first is that Jesus Christ is the way through which our violent world can attain the truth and overcome violence because the act of reconciliation he wrought for humans with God and with neighbor is based on ungrasping and his self-emptying stance. Secondly, since we experience every day in the world acts of violence, murder and death Jesus shows us that this way of existence in the world is not the ultimate rule of life, it is a lie; therefore we need to stop
it. Unfortunately we are incapable of stopping it on our own, so we need the grace of God which Jesus bestows on us by his life and paschal mystery. Thirdly, it is the victim of violence not the perpetrator who has the key to end the reprisal and counter-reprisal. Jesus stopped the spiral of violent reprisal and showed that that true escape from evil sought by humans is possible only through offering the other cheek although this renders us even more vulnerable. Our salvation comes from his immense loving refusal to retaliate, most of all in his solidarity with the victims of sin and death, since he himself has been tested and purified through suffering. “It is precisely as victim that he intercedes for his enemies, and he identifies himself with them insofar as they are harmed by evil. As a result, people find themselves simultaneously in two camps. As sinners they turn against the crucified one, as victims of their own and others’ misdeeds, they are accepted into a new community of prayer and hope before God, by him whom they have hurt.”

In Jesus God has given to the world the fullness of grace; in him God is justifying, forgiving, healing and reconciling the world to God’s self. The life, teaching and the paschal mystery of Jesus offers us a new model of imitation because he comes and presents to us the original mode of relationship which we must imitate. The model of human relationships he introduces to us is that which is found in the self-emptying love in the Trinity. Therefore the anthropology we have formulated is an anthropology of self-emptying love.

96 Raymund Schwager, “Christ’s Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice,” 118
PART TWO

INTRA-TRINITARIAN KENOSIS A REVERSAL OF VIOLENT MIMEISIS
CHAPTER II

3.0 KENOTIC SOTERIOLOGY: GOD IS LOVE

After establishing a kenotic anthropology in the first chapter, this chapter will present a soteriology based on the self-emptying character of God. Kenotic anthropology was outlined in the last chapter as consequent recognition of the experience of human treachery, envious competition, lies that conceal murderous scheming, unanimous exclusion of scapegoats, and violence in our world. Another way of putting it is to acknowledge that we are confronted in the world with the mystery of sin. Taking seriously human history and the mystery of sin in our world illuminates our understanding of the revelation of God and humanity that was made manifest in the bloody death of Christ as a mystery of our salvation. This is so because we need to take into consideration the experience of our human condition if we really want to share in the self-emptying and forgiving life of Christ, a victim of the human condition of sin. It is for this that we will thoroughly consider the question of the connection between the Cross and God’s unconditional forgiveness of sins. Such being the case, we will wrestle with the question: If God forgives sins unconditionally why then is the Cross of Christ necessary for our salvation?

Our response to this question will be divided into three main parts: the first will deal with the power of sin which annihilates the consciousness of sins. We will argue that what the Cross of Christ does is to unveil the lie that keeps us from receiving forgiveness by pointing out that salvation from sin comes through forgiveness and not through the unanimous murders of scapegoats. The second section will deal with salvation as set in the drama of God’s kenotic life. This drama of the Godhead will be divided into three parts: the eternal kenosis in the Godhead as the condition of possibility of all historical kenosis; creation of creaturely freedom and the
establishment of a covenant, to which God must ever remain faithful even if the creaturely freedom should be unfaithful; and the incarnation leading to the paschal mystery. The Cross will be presented as having a governing priority in this trinitarian drama for our salvation. The third and last section will treat the issue of remembering what Jesus lived for and died for. Since Jesus lived and died for us (sacrifice) that we may be reconciled to God, we will point out that the fruit of this sacrifice for us must be authentic Christian living or Christian living-in-grace, lives willingly offered for the reconciliation with God, with neighbor, and with creation.

3.1 LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD

Gil Bailie makes a wonderful connection between the ‘scapegoat’ in the Old Testament and the ‘Lamb of God’ in the New Testament since both of them are meant to take away the sins of the world. Unlike the scapegoat who takes away the sins of the people, the Lamb of God takes away the power which gives birth to individual sins. It is for this that the mention of the Lamb of God emphasizes both the innocence of the victim and the sacrificial reversal that takes place because of the revelation made by the Lamb. The Lamb of God reveals to humanity that sins are taken away by the self-emptying stance of God manifested in the unconditional forgiveness of sinners and not by the unanimous murders of scapegoats. The reversal happens when the Lamb of God in his human form, who like all human beings should demand victims to take away sins, himself dies at the hands of the victimizers in an act of forgiveness. By this stance the Lamb of God reverses the age-old scapegoat mechanism and reveals that forgiveness is the new way of attaining reconciliation with God and neighbor.
Bailie, like ‘Piet Schoonenberg,’\(^1\) finds in John’s gospel a summary of striking similarities between the scapegoat mechanisms or sacrifices employed throughout the history of the ancient society in order to take away sins and the way the gospels talk about the same reality. They both find in what John the Baptist said to his disciples a revelation of the mystery of sin. John writes: “The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (Jn. 1:29). The Church has given this proclamation a prominent place in its liturgy as it is found in the Gloria, in the litany during fraction (Agnus Dei.. addressed to the sacrificed savior), and at the elevation of the body and blood of Christ.

The significance of these proclamations is that in the Gloria and in John the Baptist’s call to behold the Lamb of God, sin is referred to in singular form: SIN. On the contrary, at the elevation of the body and blood of Christ, sin is referred to in plural: sins. The Latin text of the Gloria translates the Greek (Κύριε ὁ Θεός, ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Υἱός τοῦ Πατρός, ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου) into (Dómine Deus, Agnus Dei, Fílius Patris, qui tollis peccáta mundi). The point of contention here is how the Greek text maintains John the Baptist’s singular form for SIN (ἁμαρτίαν) while the Latin uses the plural form, sins (peccáta). Unfortunately, the 2011 English translation of the Roman Missal changes the 1970 and 2002 translations which did not keep exactly the Latin text which had a plural form for sins (peccáta). The 1970 and 2002 missal translated it as if it was (peccatum) SIN as it read: “Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father

\(^{1}\) Piet Schoonenberg in his work *Sin and Man: A Theological View*, tr. Joseph Donceel, (Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1965), makes a biblical exegesis of the phrase “the sin of the world” in order to bring forward the idea that since the Fall of Adam and Eve the world has been subjected to sin. He began to view sin not only as a pervading alienation from God and creatures represented by merely the performance of single or individual sinful acts, but that human beings are “situated” in the context of a sinful world. Therefore sin is understood as a power which binds human beings at both individual and social levels.
who takes away the SIN of the world.”² This being the case, then, it makes more sense to argue that the Greek text was maintaining the biblical proclamation of John the Baptist which announces that the Lamb of God comes to take away the “power of sin” which makes all individual sins possible.

However this apparent inconsistency in the use SIN and sins is an important one because the Sin of the world is the condition of possibility of all individual sins. It is not without importance that this inconsistency is present in the entire work of René Girard. Girard considers Satan (scandal) to be a power that causes all other individual scandals because like SIN he is the father of all lies. From SIN we have individual sins which include “envy, lust, pride, greed, jealousy, avarice, and covetousness, each one famishing further a craving it cannot satisfy and swirling the sinner ever deeper into a vortex of luring, lying, swindling, pandering, betrayal, and violence.”³ In this regard, “to sin is to succumb to the entangled nexus of rivalistic desires and thereby to fall ever more inextricably under the power of SIN.”⁴ Bailie argues that “the power of sin” is synonymous with “the power of Satan” in his accusatory, lying and murderous scheming. As a power, SIN destroys the consciousness of sins. Sin like Satan obliterates the consciousness of sins “by infecting the whole community and swirling it into the most profound kind of madness, sin magically transforms itself into righteousness, rectitude, peace and social

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² 2002 Roman Missal
³ Gil Bailie, “René Girard’s Contribution to the Church of the 21st Century,” In Communion: international Catholic Review, 26 No. 1 (Spring 1999), 134-153
⁴ Ibid., 139
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camaraderie.”

The Lamb of God comes to reveal and to take away SIN, the mechanism which destroys the consciousness of sins.

In order to understand the centrality of the Cross for our salvation it is important to understand sin not only as a moral problem but as a power which makes us turn our desires in a wrong direction. “Sin of course, is (ἁμαρτίαν) hamartia, missing the mark. Girard brings Augustine’s understanding of sin (homo incurvatus in se) into a sharper focus. It is turning one’s desires in a wrong direction; it is imitating the wrong model, or imitating only enviously and rivalously.”

This is a failure to desire what God desires because desiring what another person desires is longing for something that both the model and the imitator cannot possess. “The failure to desire what God desires, the theme of the first commandment, is therefore the theological summation of the human predicament. The irresistible impulse to desire what our fellow fallen creatures desire, the theme of the last commandment, is the anthropological summation of that same predicament.”

In short, when human beings turn their desires away from God’s desire to material things or social honor made desirable by the other with whom they must compete, SIN infects them with more sins. Bailie quotes Virgil instructing Dante: “For when your longings center on things such that sharing them apportions less to each, the envy stirs the bellows of your sighs. But if the love within the Highest Sphere should turn your longings heavenward, the fear inhabiting your breast would disappear; for there, the more there are who would say ‘ours’ so much the greater is the good possessed by each.”

The love within the Highest Sphere would

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5 Ibid., 139

6 Ibid., 136

7 Ibid., 136

8 Ibid., 136
certainly destroy the tendency to grasp at things which bind human relationships in relentless competition. The reality is that people have desired being (including material property) by grasping after it than receiving it as a gratuitous gift of love.

What the Cross reveals is the connection between the power of Satan (SIN) and the forgiveness of sins. “We begin to understand the meaning of the Cross when we realize that it is the ‘power of Satan’ that keeps fallen humanity from receiving forgiveness… of course fallen and sinful humanity stands constantly in need of forgiveness, but the urgency with which Jesus takes up the task of forgiveness needs to be understood in historical relationship to the Cross and its far flung anthropological effects.”

The bottom line is that both in the Christian Bible and in ancient-history-of-religions (mythic or what Girard calls archaic religions) humanity has gone to the “CROSS” (execution or expulsion of the supposed cause of the problem) to take away their sins. Bailie writes:

Speaking anthropologically, the ‘Cross’ is where sin ridden humanity has always gone to take away its "sins," and the Cross is where Jesus went to take away humanity's sinful mechanism for converting its own sins into righteousness. That mechanism is the SIN of the world, for it is what made the world the cultural world of fallen humanity possible. This SIN is a deeper and graver moral calamity than ordinary "sins," both because it is fueled by collective self-delusion and accompanied by a sense of righteous rectitude and because it makes forgiveness impossible by annihilating our consciousness of sin. It is the sin against the Holy Spirit, its unforgivability as much a product of its intrinsic epistemological defects as its moral iniquities. It is unforgivable because its ruse for taking away the sins of the world prevents the recognition of the need for forgiveness.

The SIN of the world theologically termed as original sin prevents the need for forgiveness because no one is held responsible for any sins, except the community “we,” which in short is to say that no one feels responsible for its guilt. The mechanism that has been used in cultures and religions is revealed at the Cross since the Cross of Jesus exposes each one’s

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9 Ibid., 139
10 Ibid., 151
complicity in the SIN of the world and invites the onlookers to the act of love and forgiveness as the only way through which Sin can be purged. The Cross of Jesus Christ really deprives humanity of its age-old way of reconciliation. “A world gradually being deprived of its age-old method of ridding itself of “sins” is a world desperately in need of another way of dealing with the problem of sin. It is against this anthropological backdrop that we can best understand the fact that forgiveness was such a conspicuous feature of Jesus’ ministry. So much so, in fact, that at the Last Supper he told his disciples that the reason his blood would be shed was “so that sins may be forgiven.”\footnote{Ibid., 151} Therefore relating the Cross and forgiveness in this way invites us to look for a different model of reconciliation than the one employed by ancient religions of the world.

\section*{3.2 THE INTER-TRINITARIAN KENOSIS MODEL}

Hans Urs von Balthasar argues that a clear understanding of the connection between the Cross and the forgiveness of sins is the foundation of establishing a balanced soteriology. For the Cross and the death of Jesus Christ lead us into the drama of eternal self-giving and self-emptying love in the Trinity. Before we turn to Balthasar’s analysis of the connection between God’s unconditional forgiveness of sins and the Cross of Jesus as necessary for understanding our salvation, let us consider Jean-Luc Marion’s exposition of the biblical notion that God is the ground of each one’s being. Marion casts more light on the understanding of the mystery of a kenotic God presented by Balthasar in answer to the question of the relation between the Cross and the unconditional forgiveness of sins. Marion makes an important development for our thesis as he argues that God bestows being by depriving God’s self of being through self-emptying love. God’s kenosis is the condition of possibility of all creation and its redemption. Marion in
his work, *God Without Being*, challenges a metaphysical understanding of God in which every being that is ontologically dependent on God should be conceived as having the source of their “beingness” in a supreme *Being*, God. Marion believes that taking a distance from metaphysical conceptions of God allows us to move to a new conception of God who is Charity, *agape*.

Marion says that the reason for such a strange tittle to his work is not to negate that God exists but that God exists, is the least of things he is concerned with. For him “at issue here is not the possibility of God’s attaining *Being*, but, quite the opposite, the possibility of *Being*’s attaining to God.” This is important for Marion because the philosophical objectification of God leads to idolatry which creates God in our own image instead of God creating us in God’s own image. Marion writes:

> Under the tittle *God Without Being*, I am attempting to bring out the absolute freedom of God with regard to all determinations, including, first of all, the basic condition that renders all other conditions possible and even necessary – for us, humans – the fact of *Being*. Because, *for us*, as for all the beings of the world, it is first necessary ‘to be’ in order, indissolubly, ‘to live and to move’ (*Acts* 17:28), and thus eventually also to love. But *for God*, if at least we resist the temptation to reduce him immediately to our own measure, does still the same apply? On the contrary, … ‘God is love,’ then God loves before being, He only is as He embodies himself – in order to love more closely that which and those who, themselves, have first to be.

Marion argues that assigning to God “*Being*” only imposes on God our human assumptions as people who exist in the realm of “*being*.” This understanding of God renders God an “idol” or the projection of our ideas onto an object which mirrors back the viewer to the viewer’s self. Consequently, God becomes an idol or a mirror through which we can see only our hoped for perfections in what we designate as God.

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13 Ibid., xx
Marion retains the understanding that God is the ground of our being, but with the view that God is an “icon” in whose gaze we exist. The difference between the Idol and the icon is that in the idol it is us looking at God and assigning our intellectual limits to God. On the other hand, in the icon it is God who gazes at us, God has nothing to do with what we assign to God’s self because God dwells outside the borders we draw for God. The importance of looking at God as an icon lies in the fact that we cannot assign to God our intellectual limits and such being the case we can only be witnesses to the gaze through which we live, move and have our being. If we employ Bailie here, Marion seeks “to locate the ontogenesis not in Divine Being shared from superabundance, but rather in the Divine Self-emptying Gift-of-being given kenotically to the other with no objectifiable remainder.”

Bailie very well sums up Marion as follows:

The recognition that the truth about God -- that God is the Love that empties Himself so that the one(s) He loves might have being -- is a truth that breaks in on humanity at the Cross. To speak doctrinally, it is at the Cross and on the Cross where the supreme act of kenotic self-giving occurs simultaneously in both the Father and the Son, an act of kenotic self-giving which Christians, by virtue of their new identity, are prompted by the Spirit of Truth to imitate. Being, from this perspective, consists in always giving one's being to the Other from whom one received it or to others for whom the gift is a standing invitation to participate in the self-giving economy of the ‘Kingdom.’

In God’s kenosis made fully manifest on the Cross we encounter a God without being because there God crosses out all our idolatrous conceptions of God to reveal that selfhood is given to humanity only through God’s self-emptying love.

God is more than anything a continuously self-giving gift of self. “The key to Christian subjectivity is being subject to the Other. The true self is the giving away of the self to the Other

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15 Ibid., 127
and/or others. It is pouring out one’s life, losing one’s life in order to find it.”\textsuperscript{16} It is precisely at this point that the Cross makes sense because it is there more than anywhere that we find a model that speaks eloquently that \textit{being} is received in self-emptying. It is for this that Paul in contemplating Christ’s obedient death on the Cross proclaims, “therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name” (Phil 2:9). The call Jesus makes to his disciples resounds at the Cross: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow me” (Mk 8:43; Lk 9:23, Mt 16:25). The Cross presents to the world a model to imitate, the one who empties oneself and finds one’s \textit{being} in giving it away for the other by living out \textit{agape} to the end.

The notion of the triune \textit{agape} presented by Marion shades more light on Balthasar’s treatment of the relation between the Cross and the unconditional forgiveness of sins on one hand, and on the other, it helps us understand mimesis and its scapegoat mechanism. Balthasar finds this relation echoed in Girard’s \textit{Violence and the Sacred} and \textit{Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World} as he sums it up:

Christ is the fulfillment of “all the things that have been hidden since the foundation of the world,” but only insofar as he takes their meaning (a meaning that is necessarily self-concealing), uncovers it, completes it and radically reverses it. This becomes clear in the opposition between the two “logos” – principles of Heraclitus and John: the former is the logos of harmony through violence; the latter is the logos that renounces violence, which the world “cannot understand,” “cannot know” and “did not accept” (Jn 1:5, 10, 11).\textsuperscript{17}

The Cross exposes the SIN of the world, rejects it and offers a possibility of dealing with all other sins of the world. The possibility lies in self-giving and forgiving love. Balthasar sees in Girard a helpful insight to answering an overarching question in the history of Christian

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 127

soteriology: the inseparability of God’s unconditional forgiveness of sins and the necessity of the Cross for that forgiveness. Balthasar asks: “Why the cross, if God forgives in any case?”

Balthasar in dealing with this question clusters New Testament soteriology into five perspective parts or motifs, where the essential meaning of atonement should encompass all these five motifs. First and foremost the New Testament presents that the reconciliation with the world achieved by God entails God *handing over* his Son on one hand, and on the other, the Son willingly handing over himself. “No one takes it (life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (Jn 10:18). Therefore *self-surrender* by the Son and the Father’s will to surrender the Son mark the first perspective through which we should understand what happens on the Cross. The second perspective is that of *exchange of places*, the sinless Lamb of God takes the place of the sinner. “On the basis of this exchange of place, we are already “reconciled to God” (Rom 5:18) in advance of our own consent, ‘while we were yet sinners.’” Jesus is the Son of God who becomes sin so that we may become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21). The Fathers of the Church understood this in a very radical way by relating it to the incarnation as the supreme exchange of places: God becoming human that humans may become divine. However in modern times the motif of exchange of places or substitution kept on developing to the point that it incorporated a new understanding in terms of *representation*. Jesus became a *representative* human being that is in the death of this one man all have died (2 Cor 5:14). We will pick up on this theme later when discussing Paul’s theology of reconciliation.

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18 Ibid., 312

19 Ibid., 241
The third perspective talks about ransom or that human beings are through the Cross liberated from slavery to sin (Rom 7:24-25; Jn 8:34). This perspective puts together ransom, redemption and propitiation, all taking effect in the blood of the Son which presupposes the Son’s death which buys back the sinner for God. Fourthly, we have a motif of restoration of freedom. This is posited to have taken place through the Holy Spirit because it is only in the Spirit that we can share in Christ’s Sonship to the Father. This is so because the Spirit dwelling in Jesus Christ is the same Spirit dwelling in the believer. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15). Balthasar states that the “positive side, therefore, is that we are drawn into the divine, trinitarian life. From the highest perspective, the “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” is only one element within all-embracing divine purpose… to share in Christ’s Sonship.”

Finally, the entire reconciliation process is attributed to God’s merciful love. “It is God’s immense love for the world that has caused him to hand over his only Son (Jn 3:16) and thereby to reconcile the world to himself (2 Cor 5:19; Col 1:20). These are the motifs permeating the New Testament soteriology. Throughout Christian history different people have emphasized one or two of these motifs instead of considering them all together.

Balthasar bemoans the fact that most of the treatments of these motifs have not resolved the relationship between the Cross and God’s forgiveness. For him soteriology in history had failed to give a complete dramatic plot: the divine dramatic plot which encompasses the world. Balthasar posits a dramatic plot involving God and creation in which God’s role and creaturely roles are essential. It is with the Cross that the covenant theology is presented dramatically.

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20 Ibid., 241
This is the Theo-drama into which the world and God have their ultimate input; here absolute freedom enters into created freedom, interacts with created freedom and acts as created freedom. God cannot function here as mere Spectator, allegedly immutable and not susceptible to influence; he is not an eternal, Platonic “sun of goodness,” looking down on a world that is seen as a “gigantomachia,” a “vast perpetual scene of laughter.” Nor, on the other hand, can man, guilty as he is in God’s sight, lie passive and anaesthetized on the operating table while the cancer of his sin is cut out.

The relation of the Cross and the forgiveness of sin must be understood in a dramatic form or there is a need to formulate a dramatic soteriology involving God and humanity. It is here that the work of Girard becomes helpful because since the foundation of the world in a dramatic way people have gone to the “CROSS” (expulsion, execution, lynching, stoning, gas chambers, and genocides) to bring to an end crisis or to take away the sins of the world. What all cultures did not understand or were ignorant about is the reality of forgiveness and self-giving. Since they had allowed SIN to annihilate the consciousness of sin, forgiveness became inconceivable. This knowledge can only be attained dramatically by understanding that all what happens on the Cross and the forgiveness of sins is already set in the intra-trinitarian drama of mutual self-emptying. The Cross is the foundation on which creation, incarnation and the paschal mystery in their unity are fastened. The Cross is the source of real knowledge of the life of God.

Drawing from Girard, the Cross “is the supreme instrument of intelligibility and the source of all knowledge.” Bailie argues that since the beginning of human culture, humanity has been deprived of the consciousness of its complicity in sin by turning its own sins into righteousness at the expense of scapegoats. It is only with the blood of the Cross that a new way to righteousness is announced: that is through the Cross of Christ sins are forgiven. Therefore the knowledge that the Cross reveals is no longer the sacrifice of scapegoats but forgiveness made

21 Ibid., 318
22 Gil Bailie, “René Girard’s Contribution to the Church of the 21st Century,” 153
possible by God having loved to the end. In Girard’s view this reality remained concealed since
the foundation of the world. “The Cross is the source of real knowledge precisely because the
gestalt of the mob madness, ritual catharsis, the mythological misrecognition that the Cross
exposes and deconstructs is the source of all human delusion, idolatry, superstition and religious
mystification.”23 Girard is right to argue that the Cross of Christ deconstructs myth because it is
the first time in human history that the victim is seen to be innocent which myth does not see.
Myth does not see the innocence of the victim because it makes sure that the whole community
unanimously condemns the victim by employing the accusatory mechanism. The Cross reveals
that it is wrong to repeat the killing of victims every time there is crisis. It is for this that “when
Jesus looked down from the Cross and said: ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they
do’ (Lk 23:34), he was revealing, not something peculiar to the crowd outside the walls of
Jerusalem, but the obfuscating power of the spectacles of collective violence by which humanity
has generated and regenerated its systems of social solidarity since the beginning of human
culture.”24 The Cross is the revelation of the unconditional forgiveness of sins.

Balthasar argues that “Girard’s perspective and Schwager’s discovery that it is sins (not
only the punishment due to sin) that are transferred, on the Cross, to the scapegoat have brought
us to the final elements of the drama of reconciliation, yet without offering a satisfying
conclusion.”25 In our view Balthasar makes a good point because unless you make the drama of
inter-trinitarian mutual self-emptying love (which encompasses mutual self-giving in the
Godhead, creation, covenant, and the passion of Christ) the primary category of understanding

23 Ibid., 153

24 Ibid., 153

25 Ibid., 313
the Cross and forgiveness of sin you will only come too close to the real knowledge but not embracing it. This is so because satisfying conclusions have to be sought ontologically in the drama of God’s self-emptying love.

We need to appreciate a number of complementary aspects of the central action, that is, the relationship between the guilty and the Lamb who bears their sin, is to be interpreted: these arise, on the one hand, from internal relationships within the Godhead, that is the doctrine of the Trinity, which forms the backdrop of the entire action, and, on the other hand, from extension within the world of time, that is, the covenant theology of the Old and New Testaments.  

It is for this that Balthasar sets the Cross and indeed the whole paschal mystery in the drama of intra-trinitarian self-emptying love, *kenosis*.

### 3.2.1 Setting forth the Drama of Kenosis

In trying to make sense of the drama of divine self-emptying, Graham Ward defines kenosis from a Greek verb *kenoō* which “is related to the noun *kenos*, meaning ‘vain,’ ‘devoid of truth’ or ‘without gift.’”

It is important here to note that the locus of Christian teaching on *kenosis* is the incarnation of the eternal Son of God which also presupposes his humiliating death. What is more void and without gift than death on a Cross? In becoming incarnate Christ empties himself; most strikingly he makes himself void, in a way making himself without gift, since he who is life in kenosis lies in death not like a god but like all human beings. In the verb *kenoō* is implied the idea of God taking form and becoming like something else lower than the original state, slave or human likeness. However this self-emptying should not be understood as in the incarnation Christ only becomes like or that he leaves the form of God and takes on the form of a servant but rather, “Christ’s kenosis is not concerned with the abandonment of divine

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26 Ibid., 318

properties. It actually reveals something about God that would otherwise be concealed – his powerlessness in his giving of himself as servant.”

In the same vein, Peter T. O’Brien argues for extreme deprivation of Christ in being in the form of a slave but in doing so he displayed the form of God in the nature of a slave. “When Jesus emptied himself by embracing the divine vocation and becoming incarnate he became a slave, without any rights whatever. He did not exchange the nature of God for that of a slave; instead, he displayed the nature or form of God in the nature or form of a slave, thereby showing clearly not only what his character was like, but also what it meant for God.” Jesus Christ’s taking on the form of a slave is expressed more vividly in his humility and serving posture. This is the posture Paul is asking of the Philippians: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

Considering (Phil 2:5-11) in relation to kenosis, four important words come out distinctly; Morphē (form), homoiōma (human likeness), schēma (the image or resemblance of), and onoma (the name). Paul asserts that “though he was in the form of God Jesus Christ did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil 2:6). In the ‘form of God’ does not only suggest the idea of him being only an image but also points to Jesus Christ’s trinitarian participation. Jesus Christ then dwells in the milieu of the Godhead, of trinitarian glory. Ward argues that “en morphē theou (in the form of God) - the Godhead as a sphere within which Christ dwells – would then be the equivalent of the Johannine text, ‘that glory I had with you before the world begun (17:5).” Therefore “Christ’s morphē exists within the tension unique to it which is intelligible only in a Christological sense: it... presents itself primarily as its opposite and as the...”

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28 Ibid., 21


30 Graham Ward, “Kenosis, Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” 22
uttermost concealment of this divine form.” In that human form the divine form is concealed only to be revealed in the humiliation of the Cross: “And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mk 15:39).

Sergius Bulgakov, in line with Balthasar, sees the passage (Phil 2:5-11) of paramount importance: “this passage talks not only about the earthly event occurring within the limits of human life but also about the heavenly event occurring in the depths of Divinity itself: the kenosis of God the Word.” Bulgakov argues that the kenosis of the Word should not be seen as the laying aside of the divine character to tally with human limitation but it should be understood in the context of Christ (the Word embodied) voluntarily setting aside his divine glory until such a time when the human nature was mature enough to accept its proper glorification. “The incommensurability and incompatibility between the infirm creaturely human essence and the divine essence are such that the latter restrained its manifestation in Christ by kenotic means of voluntary self-limitation until these limits were inwardly overcome by the glorification of Christ.” Bulgakov goes on to state that “the divine nature of the God-Man is not an external fact or given but a ceaselessly continuing process of attainment of the divine in the human and of the human in the divine.” Paul taking seriously the humiliation of Christ on the Cross tells the Corinthians that “you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sake, that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

31 Ibid., 22


33 Ibid., 238

34 Ibid., 238
Lucien Richard argues for the importance of receiving than getting in the attitude of Christ. Getting signifies having it in one’s own way, getting what one wants by whatever means. The attitude of Christ springs from his knowledge that “to be” in the form of God is essentially in giving and spending oneself, as we have already alluded to through our reading of Marion. “Precisely because Christ was in the form of God he recognized equality with God as a matter of not getting but giving. Height is equated with depth; humiliation with exaltation. What is called emptying is really fulfilling. Kenosis is actually plerosis which means that the human limitations of Jesus are seen as the positive expression of his divinity than as curtailment of it.”35 It is for this reason that in the thought of Balthasar the glory of God is the loving relationship between the Father and the Son in the Spirit manifested to a dazzling propensity in the human form of the Son: glory disclosed in the broken and bruised beloved, abandoned on the Cross and yet still obedient to the abandoning lover.

In his Love Alone, Balthasar argues that for Jesus Christ to be in the form of God meant recognizing that the likeness to God is not in grasping but in self-giving. “It is precisely in the kenosis of Christ that the inner majesty of God’s love appears, of God who ‘is love’ (1 Jn. 4:8) and a Trinity.”36 God in Christ enters into the realm of extreme human reality even to the point of experiencing a criminal’s death in order not to give up on love, the love that even embraces the enemy. When we talk about kenosis we mean the Father’s self-depletion through begetting a consubstantial Son in the Spirit who has everything the Father has, on one hand, and on the other, self-humiliation of the Son in obedience to the Father’s loving will to unite all things in him which led the Son to the Cross.

35 Lucien Richard, Christ the Self-Emptying of God, (New York, Paulist Press, 1997), 60
36 Hans Urs von Balthasar, Love Alone, (New York, Herder and Herder, [1969], 15
Balthasar brings together the antitheses between humiliation and exaltation, glory and slavery, and God and human as all rooted in inter-trinitarian love where the most human reality communicates the most divine reality. “The move from *morphē* through *homiōma* (the full identity with human beings) to *schēmati* (in the image or likeness or resemblance) expresses a deepening progression towards externality, secondariness and appearance – towards a human externality which manifests the essential nature of being a slave, towards a world in which what appears is not what is,” the human form is the sacrament of the form of God. The representation of the essential nature from which the form comes, in the text (Phil 2:5-11) reaches its fullness when the Father bestows on Jesus a name which is above every other name, ‘Lord,’ which is the name of God. “In this presentation of kenosis, then, an economy of representation is outlined – form, analogy and figuration give way to the stability of denomination and identity, the name above all other names.” In Jesus Christ, then, through kenosis, the glory of his self-identification with the Father in the inter-trinitarian difference is glimpsed in the form of a human being.

In this regard the human being, Jesus, becomes the representation or the real resemblance of the absent, the God in whose form he is. Ward sees this trajectory as very essential to the understanding of kenosis “because insofar as Christ’s humanity is true humanity and true image of God, the kenosis of incarnation defines the human condition – its physical appearance, its representations of those appearances – as crucified, as constantly abiding in a state of dispossession and resemblances.” Therefore the completion of God’s kenotic economy should

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37 Graham Ward, “Kenosis, Death, Discourse and Resurrection,” 23
38 Ibid., 23
39 Ibid., 23
integrate the incarnation, life, and the crucifixion. The finality of the kenotic event in resurrection has unfathomable repercussions as it points to the resurrected (glorified) body of Christ, the Church or those who kneel at his feet and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Two important elements are manifested here. The first is God’s act of crowning Jesus Christ with a name, the real name of God, and the second element is that of the worshipping community that names (confesses) and receives that name as the name of their God. The action of God (the crowning of the Son with God’s name) and the action of human beings (who confess Jesus as Lord) come out prominently in the worship of the Church. Through the Son the worshipping assembly receives an invitation to participate in the glorification or the life and the name of God the Father which is given unreservedly to the Son. We shall return to this point when we discuss the centrality of the Eucharist in what God has done in Christ.

3.2.1a The Kenotic Drama in the Trinity

In the light of what we have argued this far, a searching question confronts us: What image of God is being presented here? To answer this question it is important to turn to the nature of God who cannot be rightly conceived without reference to inter-trinitarian kenosis. Talking about inter-trinitarian kenotic life of God seems illusory and it is for this reason that many political and liberation theologians have argued that we only have access to the inner life of the Trinity through the appearance of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit in the historical realm. Making a reflection on God in God’s inner life is simply a speculation without concreteness. This observation cannot be underestimated but Hans Urs von Balthasar following Albert, Aquinas, and Bonaventure argues that the mission of the Son and the Spirit cannot be isolated from the inter-trinitarian relations. In other words, we cannot have the mission of the Son and the Spirit without the Trinity. Grounding our reflection in the inter-trinitarian life guards
against the tendency of leaning toward Christo-monism in which salvation is reduced to the work of Christ alone without much emphasis on the common purpose of all the trinitarian persons. Overemphasizing the historical appearance God in Christ and the Spirit runs the risk of historicizing salvation without paying attention to its ontological origin in God’s inner existence. Despite being three hypotheses with their specific roles, God is always a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in which each person is involved in every work for our salvation in a particular way.

One example of how the three persons are involved in a single work for our salvation is seen in the way Balthasar speaks about the Annunciation to Mary. In the Annunciation the Father wants to send, the Son accepts to be sent and the Holy Spirit fashions the body of the Son in a virgin mother who accepted to do the will of God. Balthasar says:

> Jesus’ consent to the Father’s wish to send him, the coincidence of his fundamental free will with that of the Father, points back to a mysteriously supernatural event that can be nothing but the unanimous salvific decision on the part of the Trinity, according to which it was resolved to send the Son ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Rom 8:3). Here we may not speak of priorities: we cannot say, for instance, that it was the Father, ‘offended’ by sin, who originally decided that the Son should restore the order of creation through the Cross. The Son’s self-offering is equally original in this work; so is the self-offering of the Spirit, which - in human terms - must have cost the Father no less than did the Son’s fulfillment of this task with the help of the Spirit.”

It is for this that Balthasar also sees the event of the passion as the work of the Trinity and not only the Son who goes through the execution in abandonment, although the crucifixion and abandonment is only proper to the work of the Son.

In the passion, the Father’s loving countenance can disappear behind the hard facts of what must be: now, more than ever, this is very much a part of the Trinity’s eternal, salvific plan laid before him by the Spirit, the witness of the mutual will of the Father and Son. It is as if the Spirit, now

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embody the form of a rule, says to them both: This is what you have wanted from all eternity; this is what, from all eternity, we have determined. Therefore, there is unity and distinction in the economic Trinity (the person and mission of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit) just as there is unity and distinction in the immanent Trinity (God in God’s self).

This resonates with Karl Rahner’s treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, a mystery of salvation. Rahner argues that “the basic thesis which establishes this connection between the treatises and presents the Trinity as a mystery of salvation (in its reality and not merely as a doctrine) might be formulated as follows: The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity.” Balthasar is comfortable with the first part of the axiom (the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity) because for him in the event of the Cross the immanent God is revealed in the dead man hanging on the Cross. On the other hand, Balthasar rejects the second part (the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity) because he feels to identify the immanent Trinity with the economic Trinity would underestimate the gratuitous self-abasement of God on the Cross. This is because the divine processions and divine missions are not reducible to one another, although they are inseparable. The underlying argument tries to protect the freedom and the transcendence of God by making the divine mission a consequence of God’s freedom. This is to argue that the Father and the Son’s self-emptying in begetting and being begotten and the mutuality effected by the Spirit is the condition of possibility of the ‘Cross’ itself, separation and abandonment which took place on Good Friday.

Prioritizing the inter-trinitarian kenosis shows that what happened to Christ in his divine mission was the revelation of the love of God in God’s inner self. This understanding is

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41 Ibid., 188

important because even if one would argue that the historical Cross was not intended by God, the reality is that we already have in God’s love the possibility of the Cross. Aidan Nichols in the same vein complements Balthasar by saying “it follows that the drama of our redemption – Christ’s costly self-engagement for our salvation – must also be a Trinitarian revelation. Whatever he does or suffers can only be carried out or undergone in a ‘filial’ way that corresponds to his trinitarian position, by obedience to the Father in the Holy Spirit – the way, in other words, proper to the Son of God.” It is with this belief that Balthasar argues that there cannot be Christology without trinitarian doctrine and vice versa. Aidan Nichols puts this reflection as follows:

This tells us that the doctrine of the Trinity is not the result of reason working through the materials of general experience. It has been disclosed to us only in and by the Word made flesh. But then to recall the other side of the coin: there is no Christology – no adequate Christology anyhow – without the trinitarian doctrine. Only if God, eternally, from everlasting, and internally, from his own interior life, is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, can we get the hang of the drama played out in the life of Jesus. That drama cannot be explained without reference to the primordial interplay of God’s inner life, the mutual love of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.

It was Balthasar’s conviction that one cannot understand Christ’s kenosis in incarnation and in the event of the crucifixion without the eternal event of processions in the Godhead. The life of Jesus spent in mission and the essential unity of the paschal mystery show us the real life of the trinitarian God.

The event of the incarnation and eventually the Cross in this way must be understood from our consideration of the otherness in the trinitarian relations. “If the otherness in God is true otherness and if it is in no way conditioned from beyond, then it can only be imagined as the

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44 Ibid., 167
action of love and freedom; and an act of love and freedom that causes real otherness to subsist can in turn only be imagined as a self-emptying, a kenosis.”

The life, suffering, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are the self-revelation of God. In the paschal mystery, God is revealed in the dead man (slave) on the Cross as God who can still be God even in these conditions of absolute limitation. Hence, Balthasar insists that from the very beginning, God’s self-revelation in creation and in incarnation is directed toward the passion because the creation of a creaturely freedom already presupposes a possibility of that creature taking a divergent way away from the Father’s house, love. With creaturely freedom it should be presupposed that Jesus’ suffering, the Cross and entry into Hades is for God a consequence of having loved. John Baldovin is right to argue that the God revealed in Jesus is a kenotic trinitarian God of love. Unfortunately, most often “instead of believing in the God of Jesus Christ, revealed as Trinity, we believe in the same God everyone else does… a Bronze Age Warrior God.”

The correct image of God, as self-emptying love, is of great importance for authentic Christian living and more especially for the theme of this work: reconciliation in a world polarized between identity and uniqueness, resemblance and difference, unity and otherness.

3.2.1b Kenosis in the Incarnation

Bulgakov, like Balthasar, posits the real kenosis made manifest in the incarnation in the inter-trinitarian kenosis of the Father. The nature of God is always tri-hypostasized: Father, and Son and Holy Spirit. “God’s nature is the one nature of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, with each hypostasis having it in its own way, for itself and for the other hypostases within

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46 John F. Baldovin, “Developing a Solid Eucharistic Theology of the Anaphora,” in *Liturgy and Ministry*, 14 (Summer 2005), 113
the triune circle.” 47 The Father begot the Son who is an eternal kenosis for he is eternally received from the Father. However the Son is the content of the divine life, while the Spirit is the joy and the beauty of the eternal kenotic mutual self-offering of the Father and the Son. Bulgakov states that:

The Father acquires himself as his nature, not in himself and for himself, but in proceeding out of himself and in begetting, as the Father, the Son. Fatherhood is precisely the form of love in which the loving one desires to have himself not in himself but outside himself, in order to give his own to this other I, but as I identified with him, in order to manifest his own spiritual begetting: in the Son, who is the living image of the Father. The Father lives not in himself but in the Son’s life; the Father lives in begetting, that is, in proceeding out of himself, in revealing himself. 48

The quotation above clearly shows how the life of the Trinity is a kenosis of persons in love. The begetting power is a going out of oneself, a self-emptying and a self-actualization through the same begetting.

Moreover, it is not only the Father who is making a sacrifice in begetting but also the Son who empties himself in accepting to be begotten. “Sonhood is already eternal kenosis… The Son’s love is the sacrificial, self-renouncing humility of the Lamb of God, ‘foreordained before the foundation of the world’ (1Pet 1:20).” 49 Therefore Jesus Christ is “the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). Gerard O’Hanlon argues that “the Slain Lamb of the Apocalypse lies at the intersection of eternity and time. The slaughter is not independent of the earthly, historic, bloody one offered at Golgotha on the cross – rather, the former is the eternal aspect of the latter (Rev. 5:12), which is in line with Pauline thought as well.” 50

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47 Sergius Bulgakov, The Lamb of God, 97-8
48 Ibid., 98
49 Ibid., 99
O’Hanlon continues to articulate Balthasar’s project as follows: “This points to a super-temporal state of the Lamb which is not just a continuation of the sacrificial state of the resurrected Christ but which is, rather, co-extensive with all of creation and which, accordingly, in some way affects the divine being.” The consequence of this is that kenosis is set in the pure ungrasping relationality of the inter-trinitarian persons in love. In love God actually does not lose divinity by the self-depletion but rather confirms it.

Balthasar, drawing from Hilary of Poitiers argues for the sovereign freedom of God to empty God’s self and assume the nature of a slave. Balthasar seeks to strike a balance between two positions: immutability of God and the fact that the “Word” exists in a new way. The reason why he does so is to avoid the notion of God who is aloof to human suffering, on one hand, and on the other, not to portray a God who changes at every sight of suffering. Hilary’s great contribution to Balthasar’s thought on this subject is his insistence that God remains the same in the self-depletion because the event itself is done by God’s own sovereign power as the ground on which is set the possibility of relinquishing the divine glory, the incarnation. Hilary postulates a real change of state in the process of becoming flesh from the eternal bliss of divinity; hence glory and humiliation would not be categorically inconceivable in God. One thing that Balthasar openly refuses is to acknowledge any limitation in God. He insists that we must retain the paradoxical reality in which the glory of God is revealed in the humiliation itself. Christology must take seriously the fact that God Himself in the Son, really entered into suffering, but that in all this, God remains God. The importance of Hilary for Balthasar is how the former sets glory and self-abasement in the inter-trinitarian life. Hence, positing that one cannot understand the economy of salvation without having recourse to God’s eternal kenosis. Balthasar writes:

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51 Ibid., 17
It seems to me that the only way which might avoid the two opposed and incompatible extremes (glory and self-abasement) is that which relate to the event of the Kenosis of the Son of God to what one can, by analogy, designate as eternal ‘event’ of the divine procession. It is from that supra-temporal yet ever actual event that, as Christians, we must approach the mystery of the divine ‘essence.’ The essence is forever ‘given’ in the self-gift of the Father, ‘rendered’ in the thanksgiving of the Son, and ‘represented’ in its character as absolute love by the Holy Spirit.52

What Balthasar posits here is an ontological kenosis in God which is not simply directed to the salvation of the lost humanity but is primarily a trinitarian inner relation.

The drama of our salvation is set in divine processions, and that both the events of creation and incarnation are rooted in the trinitarian self-emptying love. Since creation and the incarnation are rooted in God’s self-emptying love then in the same way the passion is not an afterthought in God but rather it is enshrined integrally in trinitarian love. Balthasar articulates:

The ultimate presupposition of the kenosis is the selflessness of the persons (when considered as pure relationships) in the inter-trinitarian life of love. There is, next, a fundamental Kenosis given with the creation as such, since God from all eternity takes on responsibility for its flourishing (not at least in regard to human freedom), and in his providence, foreseeing sin, includes the Cross (as foundation of creation) in his account. The Cross of Christ is inscribed in the creation of the world since its basis was laid. Finally, in the actual world, marked as it is by sin, his redemptive passion begins with his incarnation itself.53

Therefore from the beginning creation and the incarnation are directed toward the passion as the climax of God’s kenosis. Balthasar sees what has happened in God’s inner life as an ‘eternal super-kenosis’ where the Father gives himself and thus makes himself destitute of all he is and has in order to beget a consubstantial divinity who is the Son. “Everything that can be thought and imagined where God is concerned is, in advance, included and transcended in this self-destitution which constitutes the person of the Father, and, at the same time, those of the Son and the Spirit.”54 Salvation of all creation especially humanity has its seed already in the inner life of

52 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter, Tr. Aidan Nichols, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2005), viii, emphasis in the brackets is made by this author.

53 Ibid., 35

54 Ibid., viii
God. However this drama has to be worked out concretely in the life of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit.

Consequently, Balthasar sees both the impassibility and the immutability of God in the eternal event of self-giving love. “God, then, has no need to ‘change’ when he makes a reality of the wonders of his charity, wonders which include the incarnation and, more particularly, the passion of Christ and, no doubt, with humanity as a whole. All the contingent ‘abasements’ of God in the economy of salvation are forever included and outstripped in the eternal event of love.”  

55 The economy of salvation expressed in what is more temporal and historical like the suffering of Christ on the Cross is a manifestation of the thanksgiving of the Son to the Father. “He will forever be the slain Lamb, on the throne of the Father’s glory, and his Eucharist- the body shared out, the blood poured forth- will never be abolished, since the Eucharist it is which must gather all creation into his body.”  

56 We shall come back to this insight in the next chapter to make concrete the assertion that the eternal divine liturgical drama of the Godhead and the temporal drama of Golgotha are continued sacramentally in the new body of Christ.

3.2.1c Obedience of the Crucified

Balthasar answers the question he posed earlier, “why the Cross if God forgives sins anyway?” in his formulation of a theology of the Easter Triduum. He articulates the significance of the Cross, the entry into Hades and the resurrection through to the outpouring of the Spirit as necessary for the understanding of salvation in our contemporary world. Balthasar links the paschal mystery with themes of sacrifice, God’s solidarity with sinners in their sin and Jesus’

55 Ibid., ix
56 Ibid., ix
substitutionary/representative death as temporal scenes of the eternal divine drama for salvation. In this way all that we have talked about above comes down to an affirmation that the self-emptying of the Son is the obedient manifestation of the life received from the Father, which continues to be a life realized in unreserved gift of self which culminates in the Cross. “The obedience of the Son to the Father in the time of his incarnate life is nothing other than the reproduction in time of the eternal Son’s conformity to the character of the Father’s self-bestowal.”

In his humanity he is before God as a servant, echoing St. Paul he even became sin he who did not know sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ accepts and makes his own Adam’s fate as a sinner hence humanity’s fate as sinners who have incurred upon themselves mortality. Since Christ in obedience has accepted to be sin, hence mortality, that humanity may be God’s righteousness, then he bears all the consequences of sin even to the most dreadful end, God-abandonment.

Steffen Lösel, in his article A Plain Account of Christian Salvation, states that “Christ, the ultimate mediator between God and humanity, finally suffers the judgment of God’s wrath, as he is abandoned to death by God and the people. The herald of God’s judgment becomes its victim.” The Son of God experiences pain of human rejection of God and judgment for that same rejection. Lösel argues that “objectively, however, this suffering is redemptive, because in him the judge represents the culprits. The divine anger hits the incarnate Son who takes it into the inter-trinitarian loving relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where it is transformed and resolved.” The Son does all this in obedience to the Father and in keeping with the Father’s character of kenosis. “By letting go of the ‘form of God’ that was his (and so his divine power

57 Rowan Williams, “Balthasar and the Trinity,” 39


59 Ibid., 146
of self-disposal) he willed to become the One who, in a remarkable and unique manner, is obedient to the Father – in a manner, namely, where his obedience presents the kenotic translation of the eternal love of the Son for the ‘ever-greater Father.”

It is based on this obedience that Christ as the crucified, condemned as a sinner and utterly abandoned by God is in solidarity with all humanity and with all the dead who have abandoned God in sin. This is the mission which led Jesus into the world, both with power and with meekness and mildness; a kind which brings together humiliation and glorification in the scandal of the Cross. Since God is the original actor in all these events, God’s love is the reverse side of God’s wrath against sin. Legally speaking, there is no amnesty in God toward sin, sin must be expiated and the Son in obedience to the Father’s love shoulders to the fullest the consequences of sin on behalf of humanity.

3.2.1d Cry of Dereliction

Balthasar taking seriously the free, loving self-differentiation of the hypostases in God explains how the cry on the Cross (My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34) is of great importance in the revelation of God. God the Father as source of all is supremely what he is or who he is in giving everything away in and to the life of the Word, the Son. “In the Father’s love there is an absolute renunciation of any possibility of being God for himself alone, a letting-go of the divine being, and in this sense a godlessness which cannot be in any way confused with the godlessness found within this world, although it is also, transcendentally, the ground of the possibility of this worldly godlessness.”

Since the Father’s self-renunciation is

60 Rowan Williams, “Balthasar and the Trinity,” 91
61 Ibid., 39
the foundation of the Son’s obedience and self-renunciation, then, the cry of Jesus on the Cross must be set in the context of Son’s freedom to obey the Father to end.

Balthasar dramatically presents the scenes of the agony of Jesus in the garden and the cry on the Cross in the following way:

Father! You cry out, if it is possible… but now it is even not possible. Every fragment and shred of possibility has disappeared. You call into the void: Father! The echo resounds. The Father has heard nothing. You have sunk too low into the depths: how are those up in heaven still to hear you? Father, I am your Son, your beloved Son, born from you before time begun. The Father no longer knows you. You have been eaten up by the leprosy of all creation: how can he still recognize your face? The Father has gone over to the side of the enemies… he has loved the murderers so much that he has betrayed you, his only begotten Son… Father, your will be done for them [human beings] and for me. Your loving will for them, your wrathful will for me.  

The cry of dereliction shows that Jesus died, living to the end the trial of human solitude, a form of solitude that is experienced more acutely in death. Balthasar conceives that “Christ’s anguish was a co-suffering with sinners, of such a kind that the real loss of God which threatened them (the poena damni) was assumed by the incarnate Love of God in the form of timor gehennalis. Since the sin of the world is ‘laid’ upon him, Jesus no longer distinguishes himself and his fate from those sinners.” Following Bonaventure, Balthasar argues that Jesus experiences anxiety and horror which by right should have been experienced by sinners for whom he substituted. Jesus the embodiment of the Word of God does this in “his eternal attitude of love towards the Father… a readiness to serve which expresses the kenosis of the logos in absolute obedience… and real communication of the humanity assumed with the reality of humankind as a whole and

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63 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter, 104
its eschatological fate.” The obedience which he “learns through suffering” (Heb. 5:7) and his solidarity with sinners moves him through the Cross with the cry of dereliction.

It was in this God-forsakenness that the centurion experienced the revelation of God and made one of the most profound professions of faith in the New Testament, ‘truly this man was God’s Son’ (Mk 15:39). In Jesus’ death on the Cross is experienced the death of the innocent one abandoned by God. Louis-Marie Chauvet captures the experience as follows: “But God remained silent. God did not intervene. God let Jesus live to the end his love for human beings (Heb 2:17). For a total solidarity with the human condition demands that death be assumed in the silence of God who does not intervene to spare anyone from it, (even) be it the just One par excellence.”

It is actually in this scandal for the Jews and folly for the Greeks that God is better recognized. “God reveals God in what is most different from God. God reveals the divine self ultimately as God when God ‘crosses out’ God in humanity. God reveals God as human in God’s very divinity.” This happens when “the Word of God is at the mercy of the human body.” Through Jesus’ cry of abandonment the revelation of God takes place when there is absolutely nothing in human terms that suggests the presence of God. It is when God is consumed by love (God’s own essence) that God is conceived in what is most unlike God, a solitary victim of human violence. This is the image of a Christian God our work seeks to project to the fore before any other image.

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64 Ibid., 105


66 Ibid., 163

67 This is the title of Louis Marie Chauvet’s 1993 French book, Les Sacraments: Parole de Dieu au risque du corps.
In its trinitarian context the crucifixion of Jesus especially his cry of dereliction has a governing priority. If Jesus is the self-communication of God in flesh, then the cry of dereliction is a communication of the selfhood of God in God’s mercy for the sinner. It is at the Cross that the exchange of places happens, the sinner takes the place of the Son and the Son takes the place of the sinner. The Son pays the price for the sin of humanity so that humanity may be drawn into the life of the triune God, a life of love and pure relationship. From then onwards the posture a human being must take is that of imitation of Christ’s self-depleting stance in obedience to the ever loving Father. “The presupposition for this reading of the Cross (the only one possible) is that the entire abyss of man’s refusal of God’s love has been crossed over: in other words that God is in solidarity with us not only in what is symptomatic of sin, the punishment for sin, but in co-experiencing sin, in the peirasmof of the very essence of that negation though without committing sin himself.”\textsuperscript{68} The exchange of places happened when the God-human lived to the fullest the consequence of sin, God-forsakenness like in the death of the wicked. If the cry of dereliction is the revelation of God’s mercy for the sinner therefore it can only be conceived rightly as an unconditional forgiveness because it is the judge who shoulders the judgment and its sentence.

\textbf{3.2.1e The time when God is Silent}

Jesus in the gospels of Matthew and Mark goes through the Cross with the cry of dereliction which intensifies as he goes down to Hades, a place where God is completely silent. Balthasar praises the silence of the gospels about what happens between the Cross and the resurrection as a very important silence because death has to be a situation which signifies

\footnote{Hans Urs Von Balthasar, \textit{Mysterium Paschale}, 137}
abandonment of all activity. Therefore Jesus as a son of Adam is really dead and God is concealed: only to be “revealed when there is nothing to be said about God, nothing to be said about God by God incarnate. When the Son, the Word of the Father is dead, then no one can see God, hear of him or attain him. And this day exists, when the Son is dead, and the Father, accordingly, inaccessible.” 69 God is utterly silent because his Word has gone mute in death, then how can we hear or listen to God. The Son came for this day to bear the sin of humanity definitively. Therefore he enters Hades not as a triumphant king who pulls Adam out of Hades by hand but as a victim of sin who merits the rejection of God the Father. The Son’s suffering in Hades then is greater than that of the Cross and even of all the damned. It is only in obedience to the Father’s will that he experiences all this suffering. God’s eternal and enduring self-emptying love is the condition of possibility of the Son’s obedience to the point of death in such a godless stance. It is only in being in the heart of Hades and experiencing all the suffering which that situation means that the Son triumphs over godlessness.

Jesus’ “going to the dead has two-fold content… first, the solidarity of the dead Christ with those who have died, among whom, symbolically, those who did not believe at the time of the first judgment on the world are given, specifically, a prominence of their own, and secondly, the proclamation of the reconciliation of God with the world as a whole (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:23), achieved in Christ as a finished (factum) event.” 70 The Word of God through whom God speaks and in whom God is made visible goes into hell as one whom God had rejected because he has entered the realm completely alien and rejected by God. Balthasar concludes that “if this is so, then this event must tell us not only that sinful man sinks into the nothingness and obscurity of

69 Ibid., 49
70 Ibid., 159
death, but, quite simply, that God hates sin.”  

It is in the hiatus that God displayed the divine freedom to embrace completely what is not divine, and thus display what divinity concretely, triumphantly, and unalterably is. God’s hiding of God in the dereliction of the Cross and the silence of the Holy Saturday is in fact the definitive revelation of God’s self. “It is precisely the unsurpassable radicality of this concealment which turns our gaze to it and makes the eyes of faith take notice.” All this takes place because of God’s love; God gives God’s self completely that the enemy (human beings lost to sin) may live. God reveals God’s ethics for the enemy; the ethics of self-giving and forgiving love. It is for this that the Cross and hiatus take the governing role in God’s work of renewing and recreating the world.

3.2.1f God’s Kenosis in Creation

Christian theology teaches that God created the world from nothing (creatio ex nihilo) and above all out of free will. Since God, in this case the Trinity is self-sufficient, lacking nothing, and with the full content of divine life, then God does not create for self-completion but freely as an act of love. God is the source of being (thingness) and nothingness. God does not need either of these to be fully God. “Thus, the necessity of creation does not follow from the proper life of Divinity and Divinity’s self-positing, there is no place for creation in Divinity itself. And in this sense, the creation of the world can only be the proper work of Divinity, not in his hypostatic nature, but in his creative freedom.” In relation to God’s divinity the world did not have to exist. Maximus the Confessor argues vehemently in his Ambigua that creation is a free act of God, a “standing out” or an ekstasis from God because of God’s love. This is not an

71 Ibid., 138
72 Ibid., 52
73 Sergius Bulgakov, The Lamb of God, 119
emanation but God’s act of love freely transposed into creaturely beings. In this regard, the final goal of all creation is the return to that love from which it sprung forth. However, God in love “fashions a genuine creaturely freedom and sets it over against his own, thus in some sense binding himself.” \(^74\) Balthasar sees in the creation of creaturely freedom and its subsequent covenants with Noah, Abraham and Moses a new kenosis on God’s part because from then on God will be bound implicitly by creaturely freedom and explicitly by the covenants to which God has to remain faithful. The overarching question here is that if God will be bound by creaturely freedom and the covenants why then create at all?

Bulgakov argues that if creation is made from nothing then creation is made from God. Being a God of both eternity and temporality, God can transpose God’s self in creaturely being without losing God’s being. The eternal being of God posits itself in the mode of creaturely becoming without letting the creatures themselves become gods but that all creatures are in God, hence the incarnation becomes a possibility. Even if the creation of the world was not necessary, God still needs creation not as a show of God’s omnipotence or for self-completion but for love. “God needs the world not for himself but for the world itself. God is love, and it is proper for love to love and to expand in love. And for divine love it is proper not only to be realized within the confines of divinity but also to expand beyond these confines.” \(^75\) God’s love prompts God to go out of God’s self by transposing God’s self in creation, an object of his love. From this progression we can make sense of how it was possible for Jesus to become the unity of the divine and the human, the Divine-Humanity, fully human and fully divine. Love always has consequences; there are possibilities that the loved one may rebel against the lover for no


\(^75\) Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 120
genuine reason but in pursuit of petty freedom outside the confines of the loving relationship. It is in this pursuit of petty freedom away from the beloved that the Cross is already set at the foundation of creation.

Consolidating Bulgakov, Balthasar argues that “if God himself has lived out this ultimate experience of this world, a world which, through human freedom, has the possibility of withdrawing obedience from God and so of losing him, then he will no longer be God who judges his creatures from above and from outside.” Since God created, the possibility of rebellion is inevitable; God is rendering himself susceptible to disobedience from the beloved creation. The immediate consequence of creaturely disobedience (experienced in the breaking of the covenant) is that God risks seeing God’s beloved creation emptying out to destruction, then, from eternity God takes responsibility to see this creation fulfilled. It is for this that the Cross, or rather, the crucified is the promise and fulfillment of God’s eternal and unwavering love for creation. Therefore creation cannot be separated from its link to humiliation (victimization) and glorification (resurrection) of God.

3.2.1g Creation, Victimization and the Resurrection

In the works of both Balthasar and Bulgakov we find one important underlying theme which sets the Cross in the inter-trinitarian processions and making that Cross the foundation of creation. Drawing from the gospel of John and the epistles of Paul we find themes asserting the preexistence of Christ in whom creation is possible. Paul in the epistle to the Ephesians (1:3-14) and Colossians (1:15-20) and Philippians (2:5-11) makes allusions to the preexistent Christ in whom and for whom creation comes forth from practically nothing. All these passages have at

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76 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*: 13
their center the humiliation of Christ on the Cross and finally the resurrection. Secondly, more pronounced, in the gospel of John we find the preexistent Logos as the foundation of creation: “… he was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (Jn 1: 1-3b); “Amen, Amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM” (Jn 8: 58); “Now glorify me Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began” (Jn 17: 5). In any way we may try to read these passages one cannot escape the fact that the Word (Christ) is at the foundation of creation and that creation in Christ is always talked about in relation to the Cross.

When Jesus came to say that “before Adam ever was I AM… and Father glorify me” … it was in relation to his imminent crucifixion and death which will eventually lead to the resurrection. Therefore the Cross reorders creation disordered by the history of human violence. The crucifixion of Christ projects to us the order of creation as it was understood by the authors of these passages based on their experience of the resurrection. The Cross is the link between creation and the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is more than the glorification of the victim of human violence or disorder but the recreation of creation or the reordering of creation. Now if the resurrection of Jesus should not be understood in strict sense as the vindication of the victim of unanimous human violence it can only be an eschatological pardon of the victimizers by the victim. This pardon resounds more vividly at the Cross when Jesus prays to the Father: “forgive them”… (Lk 23:34). It is this pardon which brings back order to creation immersed in violent chaos. A very new mechanism different from the scapegoat mechanism is introduced here. Forgiveness replaces vengeance which is a defining category of the scapegoat mechanism as the mechanism of generating and regenerating a community after chaotic crisis. We will not be able to appreciate the connection between the Cross and the unconditional divine forgiveness
unless we treat the whole issue by connecting creation, the Cross and the resurrection. Johann Baptist Metz puts it succinctly as he says that “whoever hears the message of the resurrection in such a way that the cry of the crucified has become inaudible in it, hears not the gospel but rather a myth of the victor.”\(^77\) The message of the resurrection should be heard with the cry of the Cross and the this cry announces that for the reconciliation of humanity God can go as far as being absent from the Son in his hour of dire need. This is not a myth of the victor it is a total divine self-emptying for the reconciliation of both the sinner and the righteous one.

Balthasar this far has helped to see that the Cross has a governing priority in the mystery of salvation set in the unconditional and self-emptying love of the triune God. At this point, it is important to draw insights from Girard and James Alison to show that the Cross is the revelation of real knowledge for genuine human living in a world immersed in violence. Alison argues that the knowledge of the connection between creation and resurrection set in the Cross comes from the “intelligence of the victim”\(^78\) who taught the inner circle of apostles the truth of his death and resurrection as the creation of a new order. This apostolic community comes forth from what has been revealed to them by the intelligence of the victim. The intelligence of the victim reveals the lie of scapegoating because the desire to reestablish peace and harmony in society after violence is the foundation of rituals, rules and myths. It is here that we see why the sacrifice of the victim


\(^78\) James Alison by this phrase, “intelligence of the victim,” means not a peculiar sort of intellectual brilliance, some sort of an increase in intelligence quotient. He means the exploratory and creative human understanding concerning God and humanity which Jesus showed in his life leading to his death and which was made manifest to the apostolic group by his resurrection. As they became possessed of this intelligence the disciples began to reread the process leading up to Jesus’ death as the story of self-giving and self-revealing victim, who alone had known what was going on. They were able to understand that Jesus’ death was not an accidental interruption of a career that was heading in another direction, but rather that his whole life had been lived in a peculiar sort of way toward that death and that he had been aware of this.
made the victim sacred in mythology, because a single victim had the power to create disorder and then create order. Alison captures Girard’s theory of creation of order out of chaos as follows:

This victim, having been expelled, is held to have produced the resulting peace, whereas in fact it is the unanimity against the arbitrary victim that is the reestablishment of peace. Thus a certain sort of misunderstanding, the illusion of the persecutors, of what has been going on is vital for the production and maintenance of the peace: the victim must be held to be truly guilty but also, because it has produced the peace, to enjoy a divine quality. Where before there was violence and chaos, now, thanks to the departing divinity, peace and order have been established. So in the development of the myth and the rituals that flow from this, we have a two-faced divinity, both disturbing and pacifying, who produces order out of chaos.79

This connection is very important because creation from the apostolic witness is set in the context of chaos, nothingness and disharmony (creatio ex nihilo) on one hand, and the resurrection on the other, with victimization taking the central position between creatio ex nihilo and the event of the resurrection. Hence, for Girard the resurrection is entry into the world of a power superior to violent contagion, revealing the violence done to Christ and the subversion of the scapegoat mechanism. Consequently,

The resurrection is not only a miracle, a prodigious transgression of natural laws. It is a spectacular sign of the entrance into the world of a power superior to violent contagion. By contrast to the latter it is a power not at all hallucinatory or deceptive. Far from deceiving the disciples, it enables them to recognize what they had not recognized before and to reproach themselves for their pathetic flight in the preceding days. They acknowledge the guilt of their participation in the violent contagion that murdered their master.80

Following Alison, the resurrection of Christ reveals completely the foundational scapegoat mechanism at one level and on other it also reveals the proper understanding of creation from nothing as Christ’s self-giving surrender for the forgiveness of the sinful humanity.

Thus, in the resurrection accounts of Jesus there has disappeared the element of a divine vindication of Jesus over against his enemies (the notion attributed to the reading of some myths

79 James Alison, The Joy of Being Wrong, 96,
80 René Girard, I See Satan Fall like Lightning, 189
behind the “creation out of chaos” in Genesis creation stories and the resurrection stories in the book of the Maccabees). Jesus’ resurrection is not revealed as an eschatological revenge, but as an eschatological pardon. It happens not to confound persecutors, but to bring about reconciliation.  

Through reading the stories of creation from chaos in Genesis and those pointing to the resurrection of those who had been violently murdered for their faith in God in the book of the Maccabees, Alison recasts a seemingly internal coherence between the intelligence of the victim and creatio ex nihilo. At the heart of this reading of creation stories is that since the foundation of the world (apparent in pre-Jewish mythology) the execution or expulsion of the victim of unanimous violence seemed to be the way of reestablishing harmony in a chaotic community. The story of the resurrection on the other hand, shows that harmony and peace are not created by the unanimous execution of the victim but by the victim’s self-giving and unconditional forgiveness of his persecutors, including the disciples who abandoned him during the passion.

The Old Testament stories of the resurrection in a way recast the pre-Jewish mythology which sets creation in the divine production of order out of chaos. It is this pre-Jewish material that is first of all reworked in the light of the covenant between God and Israel found in Genesis. However there are still remains of the pre-Jewish mythology – creation out chaos which still suggests the presence of violent disorder. The pre-Jewish mythological view still infiltrates the Old Testament stories of creation where God is still involved in violence and victimization of those who are disobedient as expressed in the story of driving Adam and Eve out of paradise. Here the scapegoat mechanism is still so prominent because God is seen as the instigator rather than a victim of violence. Then we have the story of the founding murder where God seems not to be an accomplice but in the end God’s treatment of Cain is presented as setting up a cultural

81 Ibid., 98, The explanation in the brackets is this author’s.
mechanism that will protect people from the cultural mechanism of internecine violence. “If anyone kills Cain, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold (Gen. 4:15).” Sevenfold vengeance mentioned in the story of Cain would therefore be read correctly as a way toward stopping uncontrolled vengeance. It puts a control to the vengeful mechanism. All Old Testament resurrection stories project to us that God will vindicate his persecuted faithful by raising them from the dead (Daniel 12:2; 2 Maccabees 7:23). This is because God does not approve and is not involved in the mechanism by which ancient social order is maintained. It is the understanding of non-complicity of God in victimization (though the stories are still loaded with God’s partiality for the faithful) which permits Jewish thinkers to see through the lie of victimization on one hand, and affirm the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, on the other. In this way through the intelligence of the victim we are rid of any perception of God, as creator, from any complicity in the suppression of chaos through avenging for the faithful. God replaces the victim mechanism with forgiveness and reconciliation of both the victim and the victimizer.

Having established that order is not achieved by the scapegoat mechanism but by the self-giving and forgiving victim invites us not to see the resurrection in terms of God taking sides with the victim against the victimizer but as an action to reconcile both the victimizer and the victimized. To put this succinctly, harmony and order (creation) come forth from the self-giving love of God as a victim of human violence, sin and rebellion. “Thus, far from creation having anything to do with the establishment of an order, what is revealed is that the gratuitous self-giving of the victim is identical with, and heretofore hidden center and culmination of, the gratuitous giving that is creation.” 82 Therefore creation is a gratuitous self-giving of the Father
and the Son in the Holy Spirit in a relationship that is not domineering, but life-giving to the point of God becoming the victim of creation represented by humanity.

Jesus’ life of total self-giving makes sense viewed through the lens of the resurrection as the perfect imitation of the self-giving of God the Father which can only be conceived as a mutual self-donation of the Father and the Son in the Spirit. Alison argues that “the resurrection of Jesus made it possible to see that the same self-giving towards victimization present in the life of Jesus was the perfect image and imitation of the Father, revealing the Father as he really is, the fount of all self-giving.”83 Jesus’ self-giving all through his life with its climax in the paschal mystery can only be rightly conceived as the Son’s revelation of God the Father in his eternal self-depletion in begetting. “From this it follows that the gratuitous self-giving of God into the hands of humans (the Johannine ‘handing over’) as far as to become a human victim, so that humans can learn to cease killing each other and come to be participants in the imitation of God, is the true perspective on creation, revealed by the intelligence of the victim.”84 We can postulate here that the full sense of creation cannot be attained without starting from the bloody Cross as the center with two outstretched hands, one holding creation and the other holding the risen Lord of glory.

Our considerations have brought us to reflect on three important components of the reconciliation wrought by God with God’s own creation. These components are inseparable: the first is the eternal kenosis in the Godhead, the second is kenosis in creating and endowing creatures with freedom which presupposes some constraints on God’s own freedom expressed so vividly by the covenant with Israel and God’s fidelity to the same covenant, and the third kenosis

83 Ibid., 99
84 Ibid., 99, the italics are Alison’s.
is in the incarnation and paschal mystery of the Son as thanksgiving to the Father’s self-giving.

Let us condense all this by quoting Balthasar at length.

We spoke of the first “kenosis” of the Father, expropriating himself by “generating” the consubstantial Son. Almost automatically, this first kenosis expands to a kenosis involving the whole Trinity. For the Son could not be consubstantial with the Father except by self-expropriation; and their “We,” that is, the Spirit, must also be God if he is to be the “personal” seal of that self-expropriation that is identical in Father and Son. For the Spirit does not want anything “for himself” but, as his revelation in the world shows, wants simply to be the pure manifestation and communication of the love between the Father and the Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15). This primal kenosis makes possible all other kenotic movements of God into the world; they are simply its consequences. The first “self-limitation” of the triune God arises through endowing his creatures with freedom. The second, deeper, “limitation” of the triune God occurs as a result of the covenant, which, on God’s side, is indissoluble, whatever may become of Israel. The third kenosis, which is not only Christological but involves the whole Trinity, arises through the incarnation of the Son alone: henceforth he manifests his eucharistic attitude (which was always his) in the pro nobis of the Cross and resurrection for the sake of the world.\(^85\)

Our proposed consideration of the imitation of the self-emptying other who comes from a realm of non-rivalry relationships only makes sense here because it is what happens in the inner life of God that is manifested in creation, covenant and the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore the kenotic theological anthropology we formulated in the first chapter is an optimistic way of looking at the social human reality in the context of suffering, violence and death. Such that our reconciliation with God and with one another cannot be conceived rightly apart from it being a Divine-Human kenotic event or as a human imitation of the selflessness that exists between the Father and the Son in the Spirit in the eternal Godhead. It is this self-giving relationship in the Godhead, manifested to us in how Christ lived and died, that we are called to remember as Christians.

3.3 REMEMBERING HOW JESUS LIVED AND DIED

We have up to this far showed how sacrifice was understood throughout history on one hand, and on the other, how Jesus offers to it a new meaning. Sacrifice understood as scapegoat mechanism has been a very effective way down the centuries for achieving reconciliation but our reading of the gospels especially the passion narratives has pointed out to us that the Cross “is a disruptive element that makes it more difficult to assemble a unanimous mob on the old terms.”86 This realization moves us to ask ourselves a very searching question. If we have repudiated the age-old way of taking away sins, establishing reconciliation and peace is there any way we can put in its place that would be as effective as its substitute was? S. Mark Heim talks of a need of an alternative that will have “its own means to prevent and/or dispel crises of conflict. It would need its own positive form of contagion.”87 For Heim this is what the New Testament does by presenting to us a Christian faith and life which propose a substitute for sacrifice, made possible only by God’s new creation in Christ. The substitute makes a clear link between how Jesus lived his life and how he died.

In Gil Bailie’s conception the anthropological role of Christianity in human history should be “to undermine the structures of sacred violence by making it impossible to forget how Jesus died and to show the world how to live without such structures by making it impossible to forget how Jesus lived.”88 Basing its life on how Jesus lived and died, Christianity as a new creation, has a duty to transform certain root dynamics of human social unity including the institution of sacrifice itself. This transformation of social camaraderie in violence to forgiveness and self-surrender should starts with individual persons who are rooted in a community of faith

86 S. Mark Heim, Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 220
87 Ibid., 220
88 Gil Bailie, Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads, 274
and then their transformation to spread to the entire human community. The transformation or “conversion” takes place after having met the Son of God in the community of faith as the model of genuine Christian living-in-grace through self-surrender.

The transformation of certain root dynamics of human social unity puts into question the whole institution of sacrifice because Jesus’ crucifixion eschews all violence on one hand, and on the other, exposes the lie that permeates all forms of scapegoating that have made sacrifice plausible. In this way Jesus in his resurrection has not only unveiled that the persecutors are wrong and vindicated the victim but he also showed that we cannot by any means turn to the persecutor in vengeance because vengeance is not an option for a Christian. Jesus died as a scapegoat in place of all those who are scapegoated in history. He who lived without scapegoating died a scapegoat’s death, thus unveiling to us that all scapegoats of history look like Jesus, but Jesus makes the eye of faith to see that “we have met the enemy and they are us. We cannot stop by ourselves.” Only the crucified one can teach us the alternative to sacrifice. The crucified one, a night before he was betrayed invited his disciples to imitate him: “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:14-15). This call to imitation culminates in a very simple but soul searching command. “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). Jesus went on to say “this is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). It is striking to know that among those he has loved is his betrayer, those who would abandon him in his hour of need and Peter who would deny him three times. Jesus shows us that there are no other people to love and wash their feet but these that

89 S. Mark Heim, Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross, 226
have failed him. The disciples overcome by such love they became witnesses to this love after the resurrection of Jesus. Love is the alternative to the age-old persecutory, acquisitive and mimetic contagion. We shall dwell more on this theme in the chapter on reconciliation, however our duty here is to show the new direction that sacrifice takes with Jesus’ death.

3.3.1 Sacrifice as Christians Living-in-Grace

Notwithstanding the fact that sacrifice has had a uniting character the new alternative to sacrifice also needs a uniting character. The New Testament has in all ways indicated the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26-27; Acts 2:44-47) as the uniting factor of the new alternative to sacrifice. The text in (Acts 2:44-47) describes at different levels the birth of the community that reread the crucifixion of Christ as the work of God and their unity as the work of the Holy Spirit. It is with the promptings of the Holy Spirit that they are able to share everything in common according to each one’s need. Heim argues that “the New Testament writers do not tire of emphasizing that the key mark of this new community is the way it brings together what one would ordinarily presume to be conflicting parties, and does so by peaceful means, not by sacrifice.”\(^{90}\) The underlying element is that “Christ has broken down barriers, and in this body of believers there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. The miraculous effect of the risen Christ through the Spirit is reconciliation of the sharpest and strongest differences, resolution of conflict that could and would, normally, tear a community apart.”\(^{91}\) In short, this community vehemently refused to make sacrifice their source of reconciliation just as all other social bodies around them did.

\(^{90}\) Ibid., 229

\(^{91}\) Ibid., 229
The new life based on how Jesus lived and died poses to us a great dissatisfaction with any conception of sacrifice in its essential understanding as a criterion of taking away the sins of the world. Christian faith therefore has no place for sacrifice; a position taken by Girard at the time of writing *Things Hidden*...Christ’s death cannot be understood as a sacrifice. This position is affirmed by many liberation and feminist theologians in our times. Louis-Marie Chauvet in his *Symbol and Sacrament* presents three schools of thought reflecting on the notion of sacrifice in relation to Jesus’ life and death. The first school of thought categorically rejects the notion of sacrifice in anything that is a genuinely Christian understanding of what Christ lived and died for. The second school departs from the letter to the Hebrews’ understanding which identifies Jesus Christ with the High Priest therefore making his cultic role central to Christian’s self-understanding. In this group’s conception the sacrificial role of Jesus as a High Priest is the foundational concept for the Christian’s own understanding of what they do in their worship. Therefore there is no way we can do justice to Christianity’s own understanding without the sacrificial or cultic role of the High Priest.

The third group is rooted in St. Augustine’s understanding and spiritualization of sacrifice. Augustine writes: “a true sacrifice, then is every work done in order that we may draw near to God in holy fellowship… therefore, even the mercy which we extend to men is not a sacrifice if it is not given for God’s sake.” Augustine understands sacrifice as communion with God and secondly, influenced by Paul, he also understands sacrifice as a person’s self-gift to God through worship. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 92

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12:1). It is this understanding which Chauvet calls *anti-sacrifice*, the authentic Christian living of daily life. The sacrifice of Jesus is first and foremost a divine-human kenosis.

*The sacrifice of Jesus is thus his “Kenosis”* – the movement which is exactly the reverse of Adam’s sin – where he consents to taste humanity to its extreme limit, death experienced in the silence of a God who would not even intervene to spare the Just One in his death. Such a sacrifice - we would call it “*anti-sacrifice*” – is more akin to the initiatory pattern of “dying to live” or of “the one who loses, gains” than to the strictly sacrificial pattern.93

Chauvet sees the sacrifice of Jesus in the service he undividedly rendered to both God and humankind. He rendered this service by letting go of his divine form through his “*consent to his condition as a Son-in-humanity and as Brother of humanity.*”94 His sacrifice is first of all in renouncing the divine form and receiving the human form, in his indestructible trust in the Father even in the most bewildering events like the abandonment on the Cross. Chauvet argues that the consent of Jesus has two corollaries. That is, Jesus agreed to serve God and humanity instead of having God and humanity serve him on one hand, and on the other, he allowed God his Father to be God and having fully accepted to become human in a filial trust to the bewildering end he manifests explicitly the mission given him by the Father.

This understanding of sacrifice presupposes a negation of all impositions of sacrificial duty on another person, but allows a person’s free self-donation out of love for God and humanity. Although Chauvet’s *anti-sacrifice* sounds more like the first group that says a categorical “NO” to sacrifice, he is of the opinion that this term conveys two messages very well. The first message is that the sacrifice of Christ brings to an end all the sacrifices of the ancient religions and cultures. It is a sacrifice which ends sacrifices or salvation to save humanity from being saved. This is salvation from all the crosses of history to which scapegoats have been

93 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*: 301-302

94 Ibid., 301
crucified. The second message is that it recognizes the continuity and discontinuity that this sacrifice of Christ offers to the whole notion of sacrifice.

The new understanding is what we have already postulated as a sacrifice of praise. It is a continuity and discontinuity because “the anti-sacrificial regimen to which the gospel calls us rests upon the sacrificial, but it does so to turn it around and thereby to redirect ritual practice, the symbolic point of passage that structures Christian identity, back toward ethical practice, the place where the ritual practice is verified.”95 We will pick up on this theme in the next chapter as we reflect on the eucharistic gift. However, for now it suffices to point out that the right understanding of sacrifice lies in a loving response to a gift of the love of God poured into our hearts and that the response to the gift we have received from God (his Word) is not complete unless it becomes a service to humanity, what Chauvet calls “‘liturgy of the neighbor,’ beginning with the poor.”96 The cultic and the testamentary or ethics cannot be separated.

Chauvet arguing from the letter to the Hebrews compares the Old Testament priesthood (chosen from among the people and consecrated for the people to offer sacrifice for his sins and for those of the people) with Christ’s priesthood consecration which is set in the kenosis or in the infinity solidarity with humanity (Heb 2:17-18) even to death (Heb 4:15-16). In Jesus Christ’s priestly liturgy two main vehicles of salvation in the Old Testament are corrected or even abolished: the ancient priesthood with its sacrifices and the law as understood by Paul. This is so because Christ’s priesthood was not manifestly in the cultic service he rendered to God but in the liturgy of the neighbor especially those who were the most marginalized, abandoned and rejected by the society. “Now, the sacrificing of the sacrifice cannot be restricted only to Jesus’ death,

95 Ibid., 307
96 Ibid., 286
which has meaning only in the logic of his life of giving. His dying-for is the ultimate expression of his living-for… Jesus’ priesthood and sacrifice were exercised existentially, and not ritually.\textsuperscript{97}

Paul without a mention of the word sacrifice presents at length what a Christian sacrifice should look like. Paul shows that sacrifice is actually the authentic Christian living, which entails living-in-grace with one’s brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:9-20).

It is this notion of Christian life (present your bodies a living sacrifice) that has become a subversion of all ancient forms of sacrifices which suggested killing the cause of crisis. It is with this in mind that sacrifice has to be understood as self-emptying and most of all it is more than just about moral living but even an ethics for the enemy. Paul is saying by treating with generosity, love and forgiveness those who hurt us we will be heaping burning coal on their heads because this way of acting will eventually inspire and sharpen the enemy’s contrition.

\subsection*{3.3.2 Sharing in God’s life through Christ’s Kenosis}

The membership to the Christian community (the body of Christ) is marked by baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3-5). The initiation into the community,
founded on the death and resurrection of the crucified victim, ushers the initiates to walk in the
ewness of life, free from scapegoat mechanism. “This initiation is an act of identification with
Christ and his death as an unjustly scapegoated victim.” Baptism as an initiation into the new
community is different from all forms of initiations in ancient cultures and religions which were
marked by sacrifice and bloodshed. The death of Jesus Christ into which new members are
baptized crosses out all old sacrifices. According to Heim it is a sacrifice to “save us from
sacrifice.” Heim found in the death of Jesus Christ a sacrifice to save us from the hypnotizing
models of reconciliation achieved through sacrifice as in the cults of the history-of-religions.

Similarly, Simon J. Taylor argues that in the death of Jesus we are “saved from being
saved” or rather we are saved from the scapegoat mechanism. Taylor’s sarcasm for the term
“salvation” reveals a paradox in which salvation is seen as something from which we must be
saved although at the same time it is something which we should long for. The combination of
salvation as something that must be avoided and something we desperately need appears to have
the characteristic of a “double bind.” Through this paradox Taylor seeks to emphasize the end of
all forms of sacrifices that have their root in the violent mimetic contagiousness which pretends
to be the means to salvation and reconciliation of conflict. Salvation understood as “good
violence” to end “bad violence” is actually a dangerous trap into more violence.

The death and resurrection of Jesus open to us new frontiers of looking at other people
especially our enemies, which in Miroslav Volf’s own terms is an “embrace of the

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98 S. Mark Heim, Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross, 229

perpetrator,”100 the enemy who has caused a lot pain to us by his/he actions. An imitator of Christ puts on a new person who is able to embrace the enemy as God has embraced us in Christ. It is for this that Volf argues that “the tension between the message of the Cross and the world of violence presented itself to me as a conflict between the desire to follow the Crucified and the disinclination either simply to watch others be crucified or let myself be nailed to the cross.”101 This requires the death of that persecutory instinct in us and the birth of the reconciliatory law given by the Lord in his death. In other words, it needs conversion of heart.

There is a great symbolism in the baptisms of the early Christian community which emphasized the death of the old wicked self and the putting on the new self, buried in the death of Christ. Heim observes that:

Baptistries in early Churches were small separate buildings attached to the larger sanctuary. Candidates emerged naked from the font, were clothed anew and led into the larger Church to be welcomed by the congregation. The old self left behind in the waters is the one who identified with the crowd, the one who held the first stone. The one who emerges enters a reconciled community. This baptismal identification means that when we look at scapegoats in the future, we should see two faces looking back, the face of Jesus and our own face.102

After this incorporation into the body of the crucified one: “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (2 Cor 4:10). This

100 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1996), 9. After a lecture in which Volf was propagating the embrace of the enemy he was asked by Jürgen Moltmann, “can you embrace četnik?” Volf has this to say: “It was the winter of 1993. For months now the notorious Serbian fighters called "četnik" had been sowing desolation in my native country, herding people into concentration camps, raping women, burning down churches, and destroying cities. I had just argued that we ought to embrace our enemies as God has embraced us in Christ. Can I embrace a četnik—the ultimate other, so to speak, the evil other? What would justify the embrace? Where would I draw the strength for it? What would it do to my identity as a human being and as a Croat? It took me a while to answer, though I immediately knew what I wanted to say. "No, I cannot—but as a follower of Christ I think I should be able to."

101 Ibid., 10

102 S. Mark Heim, Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross, 230
is the Jesus whom we have to recognize each time we see him in the victims of our own and others’ making. What baptism achieves is very important for us because it ushers us into the very life of God, and the life of God cannot be understood apart from its ungrasping, non-rivalry, self-emptying and forgiving love. After baptism to be involved in any rivalry, scapegoating, murder, reprisal and counter-reprisal for whatever supposedly justified reasons in order to bring about reconciliation is to negate at its core the new life in which we participate.

Through baptism a person becomes a new creation in Christ at two inseparable levels: a person becomes one with Christ and at the same time one becomes a member of the ecclesial body of Christ, the Church. This becoming charges every member of the Church with a responsibility of making the whole world a new creation in Christ. Paul argues that if anyone is in Christ he/she assumes the very action of Christ of reconciling creation to God. Heim thinks that “this focus on reconciliation is telling. God has acted to short-circuit the peacekeeping process of fallen humanity, the process of uniting against a scapegoat to form a community by sacrifice. God exalts and vindicates the crucified one. But God does not do so through retribution and violence. Instead a new community forms, built around the memory of the victim as innocent, not the official memory of a justified sacrifice.”103 This memory makes the newly formed community here and now in celebration present to the sacrifice of self-giving made by their master and Lord. The community no longer practices the bloody sacrifice because this was abolished by their master. The community instead offers a bloodless sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise for the reconciliation achieved in the single bloody sacrifice with eternal effects offered once and for all by their Lord. “They gather for their central act not to ritually perform another sacrifice but rather through the simplest of meals to recall the one whose death is to be

103 Ibid., 231
final, to deliver us from further violence. And in this way they see a truly new creation taking place, a new basis of human life, closing ranks not against the victim but with the victim.”

It is here that a new covenant inaugurated by their Lord at the Last Supper can be understood as an abolition of any mechanism which justifies the shedding of blood for taking away the sins of the world. Consequently, the Eucharist is a total denial of the scapegoat economy and entry into the economy of thanksgiving and praise ritually enacted by the Church for its life.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that the humiliation of God’s Son on the Cross for the reconciliation of humanity with God has an eternal character. The reason why God does this cannot be rightly understood unless we have recourse to God’s eternal self-emptying love manifested in the incarnation, life, passion, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The image of God drawn from the experience of Jesus is that of a kenotic God. The Son of God brings to earth the eternal self-emptying love of God and in this way revealing the character of God who is non-rivalry, a God who in the death of Jesus Christ becomes an antidote to all persecutory and violent mimetic contagion. Through the Son’s Cross the Father in the Spirit refuses and replaces the age-old mechanism with a positive new “contagion:” the love founded on the life of the Trinity. The contagion of love is not just a mere imitation of the trinitarian relations but more importantly it is participation in the life of the one we emulate. Consequently, we are called to make the contagion of love (which is the fruit of the Spirit) the new paradigm of how to look at human relations in a violent world in need of reconciliation between God and human beings and among human beings themselves.

\[104\] Ibid., 231
Since the whole world from of old has sought reconciliation through different crosses in history to which they brought their sins without success, Jesus’ Cross offers us a different paradigm because it proclaims that reconciliation comes only when the victim foregoes his/her legitimate claim to vengeance and embrace the enemy in an act of forgiveness. However this presupposes even a heavy Cross because in this regard one has begun to live and die like Christ. From then on to live without a Cross is to live without love and this is bad news for humanity. Echoing St. Louis-Marie de Montfort we acclaim: “no Cross what a Cross!” Jesus Christ’s Cross is an interruption because it is a denial of any other victim of vengeance or any scapegoat after him. Therefore all those who identify themselves with him in his death and resurrection form a new world where reprisal and counter-reprisal is an abomination. The community identifying itself with the attitude of Jesus Christ towards violence enters a new covenant with him in his blood (Lk 22:20), a covenant that is initiated by baptism and continuously renewed in the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist are so essential for our sharing in the kenotic life of God. The goal of Christian imitation of Christ is participation in the life of the Trinity.

The next chapter basing on the sacrament of the Eucharist seeks to demonstrate the concretization of the participation in God’s life by the community founded on how Jesus lived and died. Jesus lived in obedience to God’s eternal self-emptying love and died expressing his indestructible union with the Father and the Spirit at the same time embracing the persecutors. The Eucharist will show vividly that how Jesus lived and died was all directed to the

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105 Louis-Marie de Montfort, “Letter to the Friends of the Cross,” in God Alone: Collected Writings of St. Louis-Marie de Monfort, (Bay Shore, New York, Montfort Publications, 2008), Nos. 21-33
thanksgiving of the Father from whom he received his being and as a service directed to the reconciliation of all creation to God.
CHAPTER III

4.0 EUCHARIST: PARTICIPATION IN THE TRINITY AND NEIGHBOR’S LIFE

At the heart of the kenotic soteriology we developed in the preceding chapter is the self-emptying life of the trinitarian God in whose life humanity is invited to share through imitation. The imitation of the self-emptying love within the Godhead, which broke into human history through the incarnate Son, goes deeper than mere mimicry of Christ. It is meant to be participation into the mystery of God’s life of love. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that through worship, especially eucharistic worship, we can participate in the kenotic life of God made manifest in the life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ. At the heart of this participation is the Eucharist, a sign of a covenantal relationship between God and humanity. The covenantal relation has as its goal the union of God and his people or human participation in the very life of the trinitarian God. Since it is from the mystery of the trinitarian union that we have the Church, a union of many members into a single body of Christ, we argue that the Church’s mission is drawn from Christ’s own mission, to reconcile all things definitively back to God when God will be all in all in the kingdom. Inasmuch as unity is meant to serve the mission of the Church, worship is what brings about unity and makes the Church an ecclesial body of Christ.

We will establish that worship grounds our belief, that we can participate in the life of God whose plan since the foundation of the world was that “we should be holy and blameless before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). The Eucharist as the highest form of the Church’s worship and as sacrament of charity, truth and unity must also be a sacrament of reconciliation because there cannot be these virtues among people in the Church unless they were reconciled to God and to one another. It is for this centrality of worship that we shall postulate that the Church, which
becomes a body at worship, especially at the eucharistic worship is a reconciled body of Christ and charged with the mission of reconciliation in the world. We will achieve a theological grounding of reconciliation in the Eucharist through our analysis of five components of the Eucharistic Prayer in which we will discuss the Eucharist as thanksgiving, memorial, epiclesis, communion of the faithful, and as a meal of the kingdom.

This chapter will show in five sections how the components of the Eucharistic Prayer mentioned above are directed to unity, piety, verity, and charity because of sharing in one loaf of the eucharistic bread. Thus, we will base our theology of reconciliation on these fruits of sharing in “One Bread,” one body, in order to make the whole world one body in Christ, healed of all violent divisions. The discussion of these values necessary for reconciliation will be given the basic grounding in the first section where we will argue that liturgy is the condition of possibility for human participation in the life of the Trinity, the source and goal of eucharistic communion.

4.1 LITURGY AS AN ACT OF IMITATION AND PARTICIPATION

In her article, *Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist*, Catherine Pickstock shows how a good understanding of imitation in liturgy can lead us to participation in the very life of God. She argues that liturgy is first and foremost an act of impersonation, because more than anything worshippers do this action under an assumed identity. “It is as if desire is at first fulfilled only by a reinforcing and increasing of desire which we must learn from the desired goal itself. It might at first sight seem strange that liturgical progress here runs from initially spontaneous and authentic emotions towards feigned and borrowed ones.”¹ Since the true source and goal of worship is God, who was made human, we can only be true to what we really are by

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¹ Catherine Pickstock, “Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist,” in *Truth in Aquinas: John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock*, (New York: Rutledge, 2001), 87
living like what we impersonate. This means sharing in the very life of God who is self-giving, merciful and loving. In Pickstock’s view, worship is what makes our existence as human possible. In worship through imitation we seek to become what we sing, praise and celebrate.

Pickstock postulates that in liturgy, especially the eucharistic liturgy, imitation is a paramount category. Using the *Gloria*, the *Creed* and the *Sanctus* as examples she sees the worshippers imitating the angels and all the heavenly hosts. On the other hand, worshippers imitate God as they pray in the name of the Trinity in this way entering into a phase of participation in the very reality of what they impersonate. By impersonating the voices of the angels, as it were on the first Christmas night and praying in the name of the Father, and of Son and of the Holy Spirit as in the creed, the worshippers participate in the life of what they impersonate though still realizing their inadequacy and the need for constant purification. Without this tension between already participating in the person or the subject of our worship and the realization that we are sinners our liturgical action would be idolatry. Pickstock argues:

Thus liturgical impersonation is not a matter of *arbitrary mimicry* across a literal plain of ultimately interchangeable identities, but an altogether more radical and redemptive mimesis which transgresses the hierarchical boundaries between the worldly and the otherworldly... by impersonating angelic voices or the trinitarian persons, the worshipping impersonator cannot but participate in that which he emulates, and so, to travel in another’s name becomes the nomination of the traveler himself.”

Nathan Mitchell paraphrases Pickstock very well by saying that “at worship we are, quite literally, travelling under an assumed identity, borrowing another’s name and passport.” It is

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important to note from this how at worship “the earthly and the heavenly wed.”⁴ “In consequence, he (impersonator) does not ashamedly conceal his inadequate and stammering voice by assuming divine voices, in the covert manner of ventriloquist substitution, but boldly asserts that he acts “In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.” He borrows this name not in order to deny its own speaking, or to silence its declaration, but in order to disseminate it still further. For the borrower of the name is also the name’s ambassador.”⁵ In this case, imitation is set ahead of the autonomous because the one who is imitated is also the source of the desire to imitate and the aid to the imitator. Thus borrowing in worship is the highest form of authenticity that can be attained because its goal is also its source. Imitation opens us to the economy of grace, understood as participation in the life of God. It is for this that Pickstock argues: “for where all the desire for God and praise of God must come from God, imitation is no mere pedagogic instrument which sub-serves a more fundamental self-originating substantiality. Here, on the contrary, one must copy in order to begin to be, and one continues to be only as a copy, never in one’s own right… what we first imitate and copy in the divine is desire or love.”⁶ It is an imitation of love, and the only source and goal of love is to love and to be loved.

Mitchell sums up Pickstock’s argument by arguing that in worship we are metamorphosed into the object of our praise, with the result that:

The hitherto quarantined realms of the earthly and transcendent begin to overflow into one another. The hierarchically arranged boundaries between earthly and heavenly, immanent and transcendent, this worldly and otherworldly, natural and supernatural are transgressed. Liturgy thus makes us confront the discomfiting insane figure of God incarnate… the wisdom which

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⁴ This is beautifully put in the Easter Proclamation (Exultet): “O truly blessed night, when things of heaven are wed to those of earth and divine to the human.”

⁵ Catherine Pickstock, After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy, 208-209

⁶ Catherine Pickstock, “Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist,” 87
cannot be understood by empirical or logical investigation, Christ made man, but seen by men a madman.”

Therefore liturgical impersonators are confronted with the life of a kenotic God with whom they identify, not only through imitation but more so through participation in his life achieved by the praise and supplication they raise to the very God they worship. Therefore the Eucharist which is the greatest form of thanksgiving and praise ever uttered by human beings on earth is the door of our entry into God’s life of love. At liturgy, especially baptismal and eucharistic liturgies, imitation and participation are inseparable. Therefore the worship of God done at the eucharistic praying in a violent world is a symbol of the trinitarian economy of salvation wrought by the mission of the Son in the Spirit to reconcile all things to God.

4.1.1 The Rule of Prayer is the Rule of Belief

Having emphasized the centrality of liturgy in our relation to God, it becomes necessary to point out that the celebration of the Eucharist is the greatest act of worship of the Church because the Eucharist is “the source and summit of Christian life.” The climax of this act of worship, from as early as the “first and second century” of Christian history, has been the recitation of the anaphora (prayer of offering) by the president of the worshipping assembly. It is not surprising that most of the twentieth century eucharistic and liturgical theology has been an excavation of the texts used in liturgical celebrations of the early Church, especially the Patristic

7 Nathan Mitchell, Real Presence: The Work of Eucharist, 144

8 Cf. Second Vatican council Documents: Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), 10; Lumen Gentium (LG), 11

9 Justin Martyr in his Apology No. 65-7 shows the innocent character of Christian worship to either the king or his gnostic critics by explaining what happens when they come together for worship. He makes it clear that the climax was reached when the president offered prayers and thanksgiving over the gift to the best of his ability to which the congregation responded with Amen that the food was called the Eucharist. The same can be seen by the emphasis the Apostolic Tradition gives to the anaphora, and the explanation of the anaphora in Cyril of Jerusalem’s Mystagogical Catechesis. All these are witnesses to the importance of the anaphora in their eucharistic worship.
Church. This is so because liturgical texts reveal how particular communities celebrated what they believed. From these two aspects, of celebration and belief, the early Church heeded the invitation to become what they celebrated and believed for the benefit of the world. Most theologians have begun with the ancient Christian axiom that puts together the rule of prayer and the rule of belief: *lex orandi; lex credendi* (the rule of prayer is the rule of faith). Prosper of Aquitaine (ca. 390-455), a fifth century monk, confronting the Pelagian heresy labored to show that the grace of God was necessary for salvation. However he demonstrated this by having recourse to prayers said on Good Friday, pre-baptismal liturgies and exorcisms as signs that the Church and its people needed and believed in the grace of God, if not they would not have prayed for it in their liturgies. Therefore for Prosper the law of prayer establishes the law of belief. It is for this that we have Prosper’s famous axiom: “*legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi,*” the law of entreaty establishes the law of believing. In other words, worship situates doctrine.

In the same vein John F. Baldovin argues that theory follows on practice. “That is... the Church’s faith in action (the *lex orandi* – the rule of praying) lays the groundwork for speculation on that faith (the *lex credendi* – the rule of believing) and leads further to Christian moral action in the world (*lex agendi* – the rule of acting.)”\(^\text{10}\) Therefore all Christian identity must manifest the recognition of the gift of God’s Word, God’s primary gift to humanity and foundation of our belief; the responsive thanksgiving celebration for this gift in the liturgy of the Church; and the Church’s return gift to the world for God’s sake. In the eucharistic celebration especially at its climax, the Eucharistic Prayer (Anaphora), the gospel and doctrine are

proclaimed in “form of liturgical praise, thanksgiving, and offering.”\textsuperscript{11} Doctrine and worship presuppose each other and together they point to the daily liturgy of life among other people. Consequently, one cannot live like an Arian, worshipping Jesus Christ in liturgy and deny his divinity in doctrine, let alone practice the liturgy of the neighbor for the sake of Christ.

In a similar way Edward J. Kilmartin expresses the relationship between belief and worship by what he calls “shape of meaning” and “shape of celebration.” He argues that “the shape of meaning determines the theological significance of the Eucharist as a whole as well as its individual aspects. In the concrete, the shape of meaning of the Eucharist is the ritual representation of the covenant relation between God and his people.”\textsuperscript{12} Here covenant relation is not just a mere social contract between two partners, but more than this it is participation in the very life of the other. On the other hand, Kilmartin postulates that the communication of the covenant grace or the relationship between God and God’s people is celebrated in symbols. The grace of the covenant is ritually communicated in the Eucharist. In this regard the \textit{shape of the celebration} refers to the material expression of the formal shape of meaning. To this belongs all that which is constitutive of the symbolic actions of the celebration: “words, gestures, elements and actions, personal and social factors, and the ordering of the whole celebration.”\textsuperscript{13} We can easily determine the governing theology of a community by observing how it prays. The liturgical assembly and its liturgical texts form the central locus for theology. Therefore the rule


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 340
of belief or shape of meaning is transformed into verbs in the liturgical celebration and more so in daily life.

The individual aspects of rule of belief or shape of meaning according to Kilmartin are described as follows: “In general, they are symbolic acts which cause by signifying: 1) they are instituted by God and supplied by the promise of God’s saving actions; 2) they involve the mutual remembrance of God and his people by which they are present to one another and share in a holy partnership; and 3) they possess a sacrificial character and meal character which are, just as is the substantial real presence of Christ, specific eucharistic aspects.” The shape of celebration as situating the shape of believing, the belief in the Eucharist, incorporates themes of sacrificial memorial, communion, and the gift of the real presence of Christ.

To sum up the importance of how worship establishes our belief (in our case the eucharistic belief is none other than communion with and in Christ or reestablishing a covenantal relation with God), we want to acknowledge Louis-Marie Chauvet’s contribution that there is no genuine Christian identity if scripture, sacraments, and ethics are separated from each other. Chauvet talks about lex credendi, lex orandi, and lex agendi in terms of scripture, sacrament and ethics. It is helpful to understand what Chauvet calls “ethics” in terms of “living-in-grace” with others in the world. What he calls ethics should not be given a highly moralized connotation because doing so may render it less focused on self-giving and forgiving love. Chauvet using a diagram presents the relationship of scripture, sacraments and ethics as gift, reception and return-gift:

1) gift, “which includes” (a] scripture; b] historical and glorious body of Christ; c] as gift from God: giving grace; d] given in the past); 2) reception, (a] sacrament; b] sacramental body of

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14 Ibid., 340
Christ; c] received under the mode of oblation and thanksgiving; d] taking place at present); and 3) the return-gift. (a] ethics (agape); b] ecclesial body of Christ - already now and later in the kingdom; c] it is a return-gift of living-in-grace between brothers and sisters; d] in the eschatological future – already and not yet).  

This threefold schema holds together scripture, sacraments, and ethics; gift, reception, and return-gift; and past, present, and future as indispensable factors of God and human covenantal relationship.

Time is a very important factor in looking at the whole matter of God’s covenantal relation with humanity as extending from the past, to the present and into the future. Chauvet presents his threefold schema starting from God who gave to humanity God’s primal gift of the Word in the past. Secondly, this Word or gift is still received in the present time in form of sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Thirdly, that the gift we receive here and now obligates us to practice authentic Christian living now and in the future modeled on how Jesus lived and died. We shall dwell more on this when we discuss the central components of the anaphora but for now it suffices to make a mention of these threefold component of our faith in action.

Before we turn to the theology of the anaphora, let us briefly appreciate the threefold pillars of Christian identity: scripture, sacrament and ethics; rule of belief, rule of prayer, and rule of acting; past, present and future as it unveils itself in the eucharistic praying. Chauvet argues that there is a nonnegotiable relationship among sacraments, scriptures and ethics for a genuine Christian identity. He states that from the early Church, the Fathers both Greek and Latin used the same word *mystērion*, *Mysterium* and/or *sacramentum* to refer to scriptures.

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15 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, tr. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont, (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1995), 278. This is this author’s schematization of Chauvet’s diagram on the relationship of scripture, sacrament and ethics. This author has not added or changed anything of the words constituting the diagram except the words “which includes.”
Scripture is understood as the first sacrament of the Word of God, Christ. It is for this that Origen\textsuperscript{16} makes an inseparable connection between scripture and the Eucharist. Origen’s brilliant insight is echoed in Vatican II document on divine revelation, \textit{Dei Verbum}, where scripture is accorded the same veneration as the one reserved for the Eucharist alone:

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles.\textsuperscript{17}

Therefore scriptures are truly the sacrament of the Word although there is no pure and simple identity between the scriptures and the Word. This is the reason why for Christians the word of God is not immediately the book but someone, the one on whom the book depends, Jesus Christ.

There is no better place to interpret this book than in the liturgical assembly, the ecclesial body of Christ. Chauvet argues that “the Christian assemblies, eucharistic and baptismal, seem to have functioned empirically as the decisive crucible where the Christian Bible was formed.”\textsuperscript{18} He puts it in another way by saying that sacrament is “precipitate” of scripture because the word of God does not reach us except through the sacramental mediation of the scriptures read in Church. Scripture becomes a “living voice”\textsuperscript{19} in the assembly’s reading and listening during the

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\textsuperscript{16} Origen, \textit{Homiliae Exodum} 13.3; English translation by Rufinus Tyrannus with the title “Homilies on Genesis and Exodus,” in \textit{The Fathers of the Church V. 71}, (Washington DC, CUA Press, 1982), Origen writes: You know how reverently and carefully you protect the body of the Lord when it is given to you, for fear that a fragment of it may fall to the ground and part of the consecrated treasure be lost. If it did, you would regard yourself culpable... Well, then, why should you think that neglect of God’s word deserves a lesser punishment than the neglect of his body?

\textsuperscript{17} Dei Verbum, No. 21

\textsuperscript{18} Louis-Marie Chauvet, \textit{Symbol and Sacrament}: 197, italics are from Chauvet’s text.

\textsuperscript{19} Paul Béré, “From Written Text to Spoken Word: The Destiny of Scripture is Listening,” In \textit{a presentation to the Jungmann Society}, (Nitra, Slovakia, June 27, 2012), 8
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celebration. All sacraments are but rites: rites become sacraments only if they are converted by
the word and the Spirit. Put succinctly in Augustinian terms, sacraments are visible words or the
very Word made visible. A good example of this is the words: “in the name of the Father, and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” which become sacramental words in the liturgy of baptism and
reconciliation. These words are a synthesis of Christian reading of scripture accompanied by the
sign of the Cross as mark of Christian identity. Consequently, “it is impossible to receive
communion fruitfully without having “eaten the book” (Ezekiel 2:3; Rev 10:9-10), ruminated the
word in the Spirit.”

Karl Rahner defines the word (word of God uttered and believed by the Church) as God’s
salvific act (grace) inviting and empowering human beings to accept God’s self-communication.
He writes that “it (Word) is a true, real, creative action of God in grace, which renews man
interiorly by making him participate in the divine nature – all of which, being the condition of
possibility of a salutary action on the part of man, is prior, at least logically, to such action of
man. Rahner is right to insist that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the word absolutely, i.e. in
the Eucharist the incarnate Word of God himself is really present in his substance. It comes into
being through the words of consecration, not as an efficient cause but as a formal cause. This
means that the human word at consecration does not effect (efficient cause) in the species
something different from outside but only proclaims the arrival of the thing proclaimed or
proclaims what constitutes the species (form) in a new way through God’s grace. Rahner argues
that the word is an enduring and constitutive element of the Eucharist and indeed all sacraments.

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(Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2001), 59

MD, Helicon Press, 1966), 257
The word of God – on the lips of the preaching Church as elsewhere – is not didache, (teaching), from the beginning to end, but proclamation in which the arrival of the thing proclaimed itself takes place. It is the mighty, creative dabar (word), of God to man, the way in which the reality which is being proclaimed discloses itself, and thereby and thus becomes present to us, coming forth itself from its divine concealment and coming where we are for the first time.\textsuperscript{22}

Rahner concludes that in this way the “supernatural reality can display itself only through the medium of the human word, as long as it cannot present itself in its own proper reality.”\textsuperscript{23} The human word is efficacious proclamation which brings about the formal reality it speaks of, (this is my body) the grace announced. The Church preaches the kerygmatic word (the proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ) ritually in the liturgy of the Eucharist.

On the other hand, sacraments or ritual liturgy have no meaning unless they are fulfilled in living-in-grace or authentic Christian living. Ritual in liturgy should lead to ethics because ritual is always invented as an answer to a given problem in social context. Both Jesus and the prophets (“I desire mercy not sacrifice” [Mt 9:13; Hos 6:6]; ‘this people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” [Mt 15:8; Isa 29:13]) indicate that cult is fruitful only when it translates itself into action to alleviate suffering and enhance human dignity through acting justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly with God' (Micah 6:8). Ritual must be balanced by the word and ethics. The expression of sacramental ethics “is a sacrifice ‘of thanksgiving’ which has the first place among all other forms of sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{24} A healthy tension must be kept between liturgy and ethics. There should be a “liturgical reading of ethics, which shows that the life of faith and love is a ‘spiritual offering,’ and an ethical rereading of the liturgy, because the grace received in the sacraments is given as a task to accomplish, as one prayer after communion

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 261

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 267

\textsuperscript{24} Louis-Marie Chauvet, The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body, 59
expresses: ‘make us become what we have celebrated and received.’”25 In this regards, ethics without liturgy is non-Christian and sacrament without ethics is magic. We cannot avoid this danger unless we make a very good integration of *lex credendi, lex orandi,* and *lex agendi.* This integration reveals to us that the Eucharist is a gift of the “Word,” Christ, in the passion so that humanity may receive him and become him in the world. The Eucharist is central to our project because it is here that *lex orandi, lex credendi,* and *lex agendi,* form one reality of God’s reconciling activity of the whole world in Christ.

4.1.2 Eucharist: A Gift of the Passion

One would immediately think that since our project is to establish a theology of reconciliation based on the kenotic life of God made manifest in the Paschal mystery and in the gift of the Eucharist, it would be reasonable to begin with the notion of communion because it points to the need of establishing loving relationships with God and among human beings. Kilmartin observes that one of the possibilities of building a systematic eucharistic theology is:

To begin with the notion of communion in order to integrate the eschatological aspects of the eucharistic celebration as a sacramental sign of the heavenly banquet, and then demonstrate that communion, sacrifice, and sacramental somatic presence of the whole Christ are essential aspects of the one mystery of the Eucharist that ultimately consists in a holy communion of the crucified and risen Lord with his heavenly and earthly Church; and that all other effects of this celebration of the life of faith are included in this effect, the *res tantum sacramenti.*26

Although acknowledging that communion is the point or goal of the Eucharist in this way, Kilmartin makes an important recommendation as he later argues that it makes more sense to begin the reflection with the notion of sacrifice. For Kilmartin, the reason for starting with the notion of eucharistic sacrifice should be a result of a good analysis of the essential elements of

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25 Ibid., 65

26 Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology,* 352
the reality being studied: the Eucharist given just before Jesus’ total self-giving event of the passion.

Kilmartin argues for two models of analysis of the reality in question. The first is *endogenous* and the second is *exogenous*. Western systematic theology has employed both endogenous and exogenous models to talk about the economy of salvation. By endogenous, Kilmartin means that the models employed derive from the data being studied. The best example of this as regards eucharistic theology is the whole question of the conversion of the elements. The endogenous model will study the question from “the notion of ‘eucharistic incarnation,’ where the historical incarnation of the Word provides a salvation-history perspective for understanding the eucharistic presence of Christ.”

We find this understanding very prominent in St. Cyril of Jerusalem’s (ca. 315-386) analysis of change in the eucharistic elements. Kent Burreson argues that in Cyril, the “defense of Christ’s incarnation, a proper Christology, and Christ’s bodily presence in the Eucharist cannot be divided from one another. Defending Christ’s presence in the Eucharist entails defending the incarnation of the only begotten Son of God.”

For Cyril the Word became incarnate so that humanity might be able to receive it.

On the other hand, Western systematic theology has also employed exogenous models to the discussion of the eucharistic conversion. By exogenous, Kilmartin means employing models which import data from outside the theological question being studied. The best example is understanding the conversion of the elements from the notion of “transubstantiation” taken from Aristotelian language: “based on the model of change that takes place wholly within the world

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27 Ibid., 353

and the possibility of the continued existence of the appearance of bread and wine while their
substance are changed into that of the body and blood of Christ.”²⁹ Instead of understanding the
conversion of the elements from within the mystery of salvation involving the incarnation we
began to understand it from the modified Aristotelian philosophy. Kilmartin sees that the
endogenous model is so apparent in the classical Eucharistic Prayers, and such being the case
they avoided the danger of developing a concept of eucharistic theology that is foreign to the
Christian economy of salvation. Employment of data from outside the subject of study was the
danger that consumed the post-Tridentine notions of eucharistic sacrifice. The emphasis laid on
the question of the destruction of the victim of offering reveals to us that the notion of sacrifice
employed was taken from the sacrifices offered in ancient communities which were not related at
all to the mystery of salvation in Christ. This importation of data from outside the reality studied
can be enriching but in most cases it runs the risk of simplifying and obscuring the authentic
Christian notion of salvation worked out in the life of Jesus Christ and the paschal mystery.

Kilmartin sets in motion two important steps in starting our reflection with the notion of
sacrifice: the first serves to show “how the narrative of institution and the anamnesis-offering
prayer form a unit, with the latter prayer stating what the Church is doing in view of the
command: ‘Do this in my memorial,’ i.e., making memorial of the death and resurrection of
Christ through the offering of elements.”³⁰ The second step shows “how the second unity, the
epiclesis-intercessions, is linked to the first. Here the reason is given why the Church acts,
namely, in view of the transformation of the elements and the consequent transformation of the
communicants. The intercessions enlarge on the petition for the transformation of the gathered

²⁹ Edward J. Kilmartin, The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology, 353

³⁰ Ibid., 354
Church, to include that of the universal Church."\(^{31}\) This being the case, communion, which is the goal of the transformation of the communicants, comes out as consequence of the sacrifice of Christ.

The project as set in the classical Eucharistic Prayers has this unity of narrative of institution and anamnesis on one hand, epiclesis and intercessions on the other, but all are directed to the transformation that should take place in the gathered assembly so that it may become the body of Christ through the reception of the transformed elements. The unity of the Church achieved in the eucharistic event was an important aspect in the patristic theology, so much so that Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 200-258) even saw the “impossibility of salvation outside the unity of the Church.”\(^{32}\) The vivid expression of this unity was in most cases manifested by the communion of the worshipping assembly in the Eucharist. However the patristic reflection on the Eucharist, before mentioning the themes of real presence of Christ and communion of the members of the assembly, had the sacrifice of Christ as the reason which initiated everything. Therefore the self-offering or the sacrifice of Christ is more endogenous to the subject at hand. The sacramental real presence and communion flow from Christ’s gift of self in the Eucharist through which he wishes to abide with his disciples to the end of the ages. It is of great significance that Jesus gave the Eucharist to his disciples just when his passion and death were imminent. Evidently, it serves to show that he wanted perpetuate his presence among them, to be in communion with them, so that they may be in communion with and of service to one another.

\(^{31}\text{Ibid., 354}\)

\(^{32}\text{Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle 4.4, 72.21, he argues that outside the Church there is no salvation within the context of his understanding of the unity of God, that Christ is one, the Church is one and faith is also one. In his On the Unity of the Church No. 6, he argues that no one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as mother. The unity of the Church is founded on Christ and established on the Chair of Peter (Ibid. 6). More prominently in his Epistle 63.13 unity is perfectly fulfilled in the Eucharist.}\)
The Eucharist, then, is a gift of the Passion in which sins are forgiven, the real presence of Christ is perpetuated, communion between God and human beings is established, and the reconciliation of the world is envisaged. It is a gift of the passion and Jesus makes it clear: “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28). In Luke it is spoken in terms of “this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20). There is nowhere that reconciliation and forgiveness of sins or the reestablishment of the covenant relation between God and human beings are more clearly articulated than in this gift of the passion, the Eucharist. All these elements are articulated in the Eucharistic Prayer, thus bringing to the fore the notion of participation in the life of God and of one another. Let us now turn to the patristic eucharistic faith to ground the claim we have made that the way we pray manifests what we believe and colors the way we live in the world.

4.2 PATRISTIC EUCHARISTIC PRAYING

Central to our reflections is the liturgy and theology of the Eucharistic Prayer, specifically the patristic Eucharistic Prayers. We will show that the covenantal relationship between God and God’s people is represented ritually in a new way at the Last Supper. Drawing from Kilmartin we argue that “these Eucharistic Prayers convey the idea that the specific dynamic of the ritual reconciliation is the interaction between two bodies: the ecclesial and sacramental. This implies that the transformation of the eucharistic elements is subordinated to the eschatological transformation, that is, to the reconciliation of all those who participate in the eucharistic communion.”33 In this regard, we will conclude that the eschatological reign of God, which is already established in the paschal mystery but not fulfilled until God is all in all, urges

33 Ibid., 342-343
us to make the Eucharist a necessary ritual action for reconciliation, “to reconcile all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). The belief in the final reconciliation of all things in Christ presupposes a belief that this reconciliation is already at work in our daily life. Therefore each eucharistic celebration is a foretaste of the reconciliation so much desired by our violent world, waiting for its definitive eschatological consummation when Christ our peace will gather all things to God. Liturgy, especially the eucharistic liturgy, is the milieu in which our belief in temporal reconciliation with one another in the world and final reconciliation in the kingdom of God is given its practical grounding.

The central element to the Fathers’ eucharistic faith is that the Eucharist is the source of communion with God and with neighbor. Another way of putting it is that the Eucharist makes the ecclesial body of Christ (the Church) but at the same time the Church makes the mystical body of Christ, the Eucharist. Starting with Augustine,34 there is an important emphasis laid on the unity of the Church coming from the reception of the Eucharist. We can be true to our “Amen” at the reception of the Eucharist only when we become true members of the Church. It is highly revealing to see how Augustine in the confessions articulates the theme of unity both with Christ and with the Church as he envisions Christ saying: “I am your food, but instead of my being changed into you, it is you who shall be transformed into me.”35

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34 Augustine in Sermon 272 writes: What can be seen has a bodily appearance, what is to be understood provides spiritual fruit. So if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, You, though, are the body of Christ and its members (1 Cor 12:27). So if it’s you that are the body of Christ and its members, it’s the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord’s Table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is the body of Christ, and you answer, Amen. So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that Amen true. Cf. Henri de Lubac, Corpus Mysticum, tr. Gemma Simmonds, Richard Price and Christopher Stephens, (Notre Dame: Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 2006), 292-293

Church. Therefore we can rightly appreciate the Eucharist only if it is viewed as an immeasurable gift of the passion for communion with and in Christ.

Baldovin often refers to the Eucharist as a precious jewel, that its beauty can only be comprehended by looking at it from different angles. Drawing from the document of The World Council of Churches (WCC), Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM): Baldovin points out five angles of the eucharistic jewel. “1) Thanksgiving to the Father; 2) Memorial (anamnesis) of the Son; 3) Invocation (epiclesis) of the Holy Spirit; 4) Communion of the faithful; and 5) Meal of the kingdom.”36 Nevertheless it is very important to understand that even though this jewel has many perspectives through which it can be comprehended, it still remains a single jewel and it must be held as such. Failure to look at the Eucharist in this way is to crush the jewel into pieces.

It is for this reason that even if we are trying to draw from the Eucharist a specific paradigm for reconciliation, justice and peace we do so only because the Eucharist is a single jewel which reflects the relationship between God and creation, represented by humanity. We shall bring out the five perspective angles of the Eucharist through reading some patristic emphases on the subject. However due to the nature and goal of our study we will labor to appreciate the patristic unfathomable contributions to the understanding of this important sacrament of unity instead of present a systematic study of their eucharistic teaching. Their understanding of the Eucharist would be summed up by Augustine’s acclamation: “Unity! Verity! Piety! Charity! One bread.”37 The components of this acclamation will help us to achieve the goal of our reflection on the five faces of the eucharistic jewel, which is reconciliation with Christ and neighbor. It is a jewel that should form subjects standing before God as forgiven,

36 John Baldovin, “Developing a Solid Eucharistic Theology of the Anaphora,” in Liturgical Ministry, 14 (Summer 2005), 116

37 Daniel Sheerin, The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church, (Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1986), 98
healed, reconciled, and above all loved, now in our world and at the final consummation in the kingdom.

4.2.1 Thanksgiving to the Father

In order to understand the Fathers’ teaching on the Eucharist it is important to present here briefly the Jewish background of the Eucharist of the Early Christians. Most of Jewish festival meals, from which the Last Supper of Lord and eventually the Christian Eucharist are believed to draw a lot for their structure, have the theme of “the praise of God (beraka, eulogia, eucharistia) that the father as head of the household uttered before the meal over the third cup with wine, the cup of blessing (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16)”

Jerome Kodell argues for their origin in the Jewish festive meals, especially the todah meal (thanksgiving meal), in a Passover atmosphere. Kodell writes that:


The belief that forms the Jewish festival meal practices is that nothing is worthily released to human use unless God is acknowledged as its source. Everything of what they enjoy is given as a gift from God. If is for this realization that the first section of the Eucharistic Prayer (preface through to the Sanctus) is directed to acknowledging God’s glory, praising God, and giving thanks to the Father who is the source of all. Christ himself takes the central and leading role in
that thanksgiving to the Father. The Church imitates, impersonates or rather participates in the Son’s posture of thanksgiving to the ever greater Father.

Kilmartin states that “the typical configuration of the prayer proves to be an inheritance from the Old Testament-Jewish liturgical prayer, in the form, namely, of discourse on the relation between two partners of a covenant. The attitude of the human partners is confession of the fidelity of God and confession of the human condition of sinfulness. The ultimate goal is confession of the Lord who alone is able to re-establish the sinner in covenant relationship.”

God in God’s self-giving love reconciles or reestablishes the sinner in covenant relationship which Jesus manifested all through his life. Jesus in his entire life, ministry, passion, death, resurrection and ascension manifested his indestructible covenental relation to the Father, even to the point of embracing its dreadful consequences. On the part of the human partner there is always a need for purification because unlike Jesus, the human partner is often times unfaithful to the covenental relationship with God.

It is interesting to see that Cyril of Jerusalem in Mystagogical Catechesis 5.2 opens up his discourse on the liturgy of the Eucharist with the action of washing hands as a symbol of purification required for the human partner. He states:

You saw then the deacon give to the priest water to wash, and to the presbyters who stood round God’s altar. He gave it not at all because of bodily defilement; no; for we did not set out for the Church with defiled bodies. But this washing of hands is a symbol that you ought to be pure from all sinful and unlawful deeds; for since the hands are a symbol of action, by washing them we represent the purity and blamelessness of our conduct. Have you not heard the blessed David opening this mystery, and saying, I will wash my hands in innocence, and so will I compass your altar, O Lord? The washing of hands is a symbol of immunity from sin.

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40 Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, 355

It is noteworthy to acknowledge the consistency of Cyril in positing the importance of the theme of re-establishing the covenant relation between God and humanity. This is so because it is God who establishes humanity in covenantal relation through forgiveness of sins. The liturgy on which Cyril is commenting achieves this by introducing immediately after the washing of hands the kiss of peace. The kiss symbolizes a unity of souls and forgiveness of sins. Cyril writes:

Then the Deacon cries out aloud, *Receive ye one another; and let us kiss one another.* …this kiss blends souls one with another, and solicits for them entire forgiveness. Therefore this kiss is a sign that our souls are mingled together, and have banished all remembrance of wrongs. For this cause Christ said, *if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave there your gift upon the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift* (Mt. 5:23).\(^{42}\)

A kiss of peace was a key element of the life and love of the early Church,\(^{43}\) and was one of the central modes of the physical communication of the self-giving love by Christians. Therefore to kiss someone at prayer required an assurance that they share the same life and love of being in Christ. St. Paul refers to this kiss as a holy kiss (1 Cor. 16:20) while St. Peter calls it a kiss of charity (1 Pet. 5:14). This kiss indicates that one cannot enter into the eucharistic action without first and foremost having been reconciled with or having embraced the other. In our contemporary liturgies the kiss of peace comes just before communion. However we still find in this action the same need for reconciliation and peace before sharing in the eucharistic food. Christ who is broken for us is given back to us as our forgiveness, our reconciliation and our peace.

Cyril argues that the dialogue at beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer only starts after the people in the community have received one another. The dialogue asks the whole community,

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 72

\(^{43}\) Cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII. XXIX,
both the priest and the faithful, to lift their hearts or elevate their whole being to the Father to whom thanks will be given in and with Christ. It is the “total Christ,” head and its members, that celebrates the Eucharist. In a similar way St. Augustine of Hippo in his comment on the order of celebration he introduces the Eucharistic Prayer by inviting the participants to lift up their hearts. “If you have become members of Christ, where is your head? Members have a head. If the head hadn’t gone ahead before, the members would never follow. Where has your heard gone? So our head is in heaven…” It is significant here to take note that before giving thanks to God, the theme of dialogue, unity with Christ and reconciliation of all participants with one another because they are members united to a head are required. Therefore there should be unity between the assembly and Christ, in such a way that the grace of Christ is pulling the whole community to the Father, where Christ dwells. The Eucharist is the communion of the head and its members forming one body, one Spirit. The dialogue introduces the theme of what is taking place: thanksgiving to the Father. This theme is echoed and fulfilled in the doxology where it is clearly stated that all what was happening was done through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ to the praise and glory of God the Father.

There are two distinctive features in most of the prayers of thanksgiving: the praise of God for his works in creation and redemption through Christ after the fall. For example, the Alexandrian Anaphora of St. Basil of Caesarea (ca.385) offers us two reasons for thanksgiving. The first reason for thanksgiving is theological and the second is more anthropological. “The part before the Sanctus sings the praises of God as the heavenly Creator. It is in the technical sense, ‘theological.’ The post-Sanctus, on the other hand, is ‘anthropological.’ It tells of the fall and the

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redemption through Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{45} The themes apparent in Jewish thanksgiving prayer are Christianized in the Anaphora by making them explicitly Christological and giving them a cosmic image of redemption encompassing all creation with a trinitarian vision.

It interesting to see how the praise and thanksgiving, typical of Jewish \textit{Berakah}, became the central component in Jesus’ \textit{eulogia} and \textit{eucharistia} at the Last Supper with his disciples. Kilmartin explains the thanksgiving action from a Greek-Hebrew background where “\textit{Eucharistia} is a Greek word related to \textit{Eulogein}, the latter being a translation of the Hebrew \textit{Berakah}: blessing on God for his blessings. The root \textit{charis} can refer to a gift bestowed or a thankful response made to the giver of the gift.”\textsuperscript{46} In other words, it presupposes a gift and response or a return-gift. Kilmartin continues to say that “\textit{Eucharistia} has the meaning of thanksgiving for the gift: recognition of its coming from a giver. It can also mean the response itself: the intentional giving of the gift to the giver as a way of maintaining consciousness that the gift is a gift.”\textsuperscript{47} This component of the Eucharist has been summed up by R. J. Halliburton in his article: \textit{The Patristic Theology of the Eucharist}, as he states:

The purpose of such thanksgivings (again like Jewish thanksgivings) is not only to render due return of gratitude from creature to the creator, but also to ask for a continued blessing and a continuing redemption. In the majority of the Eucharistic Prayers, the series of thanksgivings, culminating in the thanksgiving for the work of Christ (of which special memorial is made) is followed by a petition that the worshippers may receive the fruit of this saving work in communion.\textsuperscript{48}

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\textsuperscript{46} Edward J. Kilmartin, \textit{The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology}, 363
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 363
\end{flushright}
For Halliburton the eucharistic thanksgiving has the same components as Jewish thanksgiving: “the Jewish thanksgivings; the theme in short is ‘blessed art thou O Lord… (Then) Have mercy upon us O Lord.’” In other words, it acknowledges both God’s fidelity to the covenantal relationship manifested in God’s continued providence for his people and the infidelity of the human partner who needs forgiveness and merciful love. The prayer is first of all anabatic (rising like incense where God is blessed or acknowledged as the source of the fruits of the earth we enjoy and the gift of redemption) and then katabatic (asking God to continue bestowing on us blessings even though we are sinners).

The realization of our position in the covenant relation with God should prompt the human stance to be profoundly that of gratitude toward God who has accomplished great things for us in Christ. The Roman Canon in the second intercessions brings this out clearly as it reads: “To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies, graciously grant some share and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs… admit us, we beseech you, into their company, not weighing our merits, but granting us your pardon, through Christ our Lord.” Gratitude is the stance the assembly takes because of the unmerited gift. The fourth common preface of the Roman Missal brings out this aspect vividly by saying: “For, although you have no need of our praise, yet our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness but profit us for salvation.” Therefore it is for the sake of humanity that it matters to praise and thank God and not for God.

Emphatically, Baldovin argues that “the persistence of the theme of gratitude in classic Eucharistic Prayers is an indication that this stance is fundamental to Christian prayer. Every

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49 Ibid., 247
50 The Roman Missal: Eucharistic Prayer 1.
other virtue and attitude (petition, invocation, remembrance, lament) is subordinate to gratitude, or better, finds its context in gratitude." In the same vein, Alexander Schmemann argues that from the very beginning it was thanksgiving that gave unity to the liturgical prayer which comprised of the offering of the gifts, their consecration, and the partaking of them by the faithful. It is for this that Cyril of Jerusalem calls our attention to the priest’s call to give thanks at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. The theme of the prayer comes out clearly in the last couplet of the dialogue when the priest says: “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” and the whole assembly unanimously answers: “It is right and just.” Cyril emphasizes the words;

Then the priest says, let us give thanks to the Lord. For in good sooth we are bound to give thanks, that he has called us, unworthy as we are; to so great grace; that he has reconciled us who are his foes; that he has vouchsafed to us the Spirit of adoption. Then you say, it is meet and right: for in giving thanks we do a meet thing and right; but he did, not a right thing, but was more than right, when he did us good, and counted us meet for such great benefits.

In short, thanksgiving reveals to us our position in the covenantal relation as sinners in need of God’s mercy.

In Schmemann’s words, “thanksgiving is the experience of paradise.” Through this phrase, “the experience of paradise,” Schmemann wants to bring forward two things that happen in thanksgiving to God: one gives thanks for the gift already received and at the same time anticipating a gift. “Paradise is, in other words, the beginning and the end, to which is oriented and through which is defined and determined the entire life of man and in him all creation… we were created in paradise and for paradise, we were exiled from paradise, and Christ leads us

51 John Baldovin, “Developing a Solid Eucharistic Theology of the Anaphora,” 115

52 Cyril of Jerusalem, Lectures on Christian Sacraments, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, 73, emphasis is the author’s.

again into paradise.”54 Through the eucharistic thanksgiving Christ leads the assembly to paradise. Such being the case, Schmemann believes that the Church makes this experience of paradise, a place in which and for which we were created, through eucharistic thanksgiving. Moreover the sin of Adam was his inability to give thanks for all he had received and, on the other hand, the obedience of Jesus lies in his thankfulness for God’s gifts to which he responds unreservedly with gratitude. Through thanksgiving to God the Church attains in one moment, knowledge (not rational knowledge but knowledge as meeting with God, knowledge as communion with God, knowledge as unity with God, a participation in God’s life) and freedom (of the children of God) given by the Spirit. Schmemann articulates beautifully that thanksgiving leads to communion with God, which is the highest form of the knowledge of God, as he says:

It is knowing not only that everything in the world has its cause in God… but also that everything in the world and the world itself is a gift of God’s love, a revelation by God of his very self, summoning us in everything to know God, through everything to be in communion with him to possess everything as life in him.55

The words of Jesus, “now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3), are very significant. “Knowing God transforms our life into thanksgiving, and thanksgiving transforms eternity into life everlasting.”56 In the thanksgiving the Church utters, her own salvation is worked out through the realization that God has already given it as a gift and that God will continue to bestow it always. The Church becomes Church in the thanksgiving it gives to God or rather it becomes a subject or finds its identity through the realization that what it is has been given gratuitously by the Lord.

54 Ibid., 174
55 Ibid., 177
56 Ibid., 176
The notion of gift is very important for understanding the whole component of thanksgiving in Eucharistic Praying. Louis-Marie Chauvet offers us an interesting understanding of what is happening at the eucharistic celebration. Chauvet postulates a symbolic exchange gifts taking place in and during the eucharistic praying especially in the anaphora itself. What governs the whole understanding is the notion of exchange of gifts. On an anthropological level, Chauvet argues for two types of exchange: market exchange and symbolic exchange. These two types of exchange are actually an application of his analysis of the difference between language as a sign and language as a symbol. In his treatment of language, Chauvet argues that language has two major functions; it operates at two levels, as a “sign” and/or as a “symbol.” Language as a sign operates on the principle of “value” while as a symbol it stands “outside the realm value.” “These two functions depend on two different principles: the sign pertains to “value” (material value, knowledge value, moral value, and so on), whereas the symbol stands outside the value system.”

In market exchange whether through money or barter system one commodity is given away at the same or corresponding value with what is received. Therefore once the transaction is honestly completed the two people involved in the exchange have no other obligation toward each other. Their market exchange does not implicate or obligate any of them thereafter. It is for this reason that one can buy books on Amazon without any physical contact with the seller because what counts is the value of their commodities and not the person selling. In this case, the seller as a subject does not count in making the buyer a subject. On the contrary, in symbolic exchange or gift giving however “each one gives without counting; we have here a logic of gratuitousness or “gift.” But we must immediately add that it is a necessary gratuitousness or an

“obligatory” gift.” We talk of necessary gratuitousness because it is not just a simple exchange of commodities between two separate islands but an exchange that creates the receiver into a subject. In other words, “symbolic exchange obeys a logic of another order: in it the “subjects exchange themselves,” in contrast to market exchange where values are what is exchanged. The important thing (in gift-giving) is less what one gives or receives than the very fact of exchanging and thus, through the objects exchanged, to be recognized as a subject.” The most important component of this is that it arouses in a human person the urge to say “thank you.” It requires an essential element in a human being, that of gratitude. Christian gratitude springs from the realization that the reconciliation God wrought for us in Christ, even when we were still trespassing, was gratuitous. Such being the case, this gift makes us to live in the world as Christ lived and died to make us receive God’s forgiveness. This forms us into subjects or that through the action of God to us we become the “type,” “copy,” “image” of God in Christ, put pointedly we participate in the very life of God who is love.

Nevertheless anyone who receives a gift gratuitously is obligated by it. This is so because for it to be a real gift it must be graciously received, either simply by a “thank you” or just by acknowledging that the gift was given and it is not until then that the gift achieves its goal as a gift. Chauvet is right in arguing:

That every exchange between subjects is a symbolic means 1) that no really human exchange can be reduced to its utilitarian (otherwise necessary) purpose, that is, to economic, cognitive, affective value, and 2) that what is vital to the subject as subject is not due to value of what is exchanged but to the very fact of exchanging, that is, to the fact of recognizing another person as a partner and being recognized by this person.

58 Ibid., 118
59 Ibid., 119
60 Ibid., 123
The point of contention here is that symbolic exchange forms subjects who recognize the other
as partners who have the same worth as them.

On a theological plane, symbolic exchange should rightly be conceived in terms of divine
grace, i.e. it is outside the realm of value and utility. Instead, it is gratuitous and gracious: “as
gratuitous, grace is not something due, it depends on the generosity of God, who alone takes the
initiative; as gracious, grace pertains to beauty, to this way of being pleasing which cannot be
calculated and therefore is given free of charge.”61 This means that “God’s grace is gratuitous
and it is not merited by the subject who receives it because it is solely by God’s initiative that it
is given. However it obligates or rather it necessitates the recipient to action although this may
not strictly be toward God who has offered grace, but to the community around the recipient.
Nonetheless, God still remains the subject for whom the action is done. The recipient’s return-
gift is directed to the community for God’s sake. What honors God more than service toward
neighbor because of God? This is what St. Augustine meant when he said “even the mercy which
we extend to men is not a sacrifice if it is not given for God’s sake.”62 Grace obligates us to live
an authentic Christian life or living-in-grace toward our brothers and sisters.

There are three actions taking shape here; the first is God giving grace free of charge; the
second is that someone is receiving it; and the third is that the recipient is making a return-gift.
Chauvet understands this in terms of gratuitousness and graciousness as he writes:

What is given without necessary reason, therefore “for nothing,” is gratuitous; what is given
without regard to value, therefore “free of charge,” outside any calculation, is gracious. Under
this aspect, grace occupies not only the position of the gift given by God, but also that of the
return-gift given by the believing subject. The gratitude of the latter toward God is gracious if

61 Ibid., 88
62 Augustine, City of God, Book 10.6
what was received was really the gratuitous gift of God not anything else: the believer responds to love by love and not by calculation.⁶³

The point here is that the thanksgiving uttered in the Eucharistic Prayer is the assembly’s response to love which was already given and the response can only be love given graciously. Chauvet, like Kilmartin, sees two theological principles which rule the thanksgiving expressed by the Church in the preface and the Sanctus.

On the one hand, it has no other object than the Scriptures, or rather than what God has done for humankind according to the Scriptures, so that even when this thanksgiving has the mystery of Christ for its object, in the background the Old Testament is always presupposed. On the other hand, the thanksgiving always culminates in the paschal mystery of Christ, so that even if only one aspect of Jesus’ work is mentioned, this aspect is relevant only inasmuch as it is understood as one of the many facets of the whole paschal mystery.⁶⁴

The greatest gift God gave to humankind is the “Word… made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), this gift was given in the past.

However Christian thanksgiving is not complete if it is only directed to what was given in the past. It must be recognized immediately that through the Holy Spirit the gift which was given in the past, the Word, is given here and now in the eucharistic action in a different mode. The Word who was given as the flesh born of a virgin mother is now in the present given sacramentally though the symbols of food and drink. The trajectory of the thanksgiving prayer is to form the assembly into a subject through gratitude for the gift given in the past, in the present and indeed in the future. The future has two arms: our gathering in communion, serving each other as an ecclesial body and the final communion with all the saints in the kingdom. The formation of the assembly into a subject through thanksgiving offers us a powerful theological bearing to reconciliation because the one to whom thanks and praise are given becomes the

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⁶⁴ Ibid., 131
assembly’s identity. Thanksgiving binds us with God as subjects in a covenant relationship, with one another in the Church, with the world, and with all the elect healed of all divisions in the kingdom foreshadowed in the eucharistic event. Eucharistic thanksgiving is reconciliatory by the virtue of its ability to form loving subjects modeled on Jesus Christ whom we remember at this event.

4.2.2 Memorial of the Son

As stated above, the anabatic and katabatic modes of Jewish prayer present in the writings of the Fathers have their focus the memorial of the great acts of God, particularly the Passover memorial and redemption through Christ. Thus, for Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew 41.1, the object of memorial is the Lord’s passion. Justin writes; “The offering of fine flour, gentlemen, I said, which was prescribed to be offered for those cleansed of leprosy (Lv. 14:10) was a type of the bread of the Eucharist which our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to offer in memory of the Passion.”65 Just as the cleansing of leprosy was ratified by the offering of a type (image, symbol) of bread so is the cleansing from sin fulfilled in the offering of the eucharistic bread. Again, in the same Dialogue 70.4, Justin writes that the bread was given by the Lord “in remembrance of his being made flesh and the cup in remembrance of his own blood.”66 In this regard, the Eucharist cannot be separated from central Christian themes of incarnation, life, and the paschal mystery: which is the climatic moment of God’s self-gift in order to maintain a loving relationship with humanity up to the end.

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65 Daniel Sheerin, The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church, 36
66 R. J. Halliburton, The Patristic Theology of the Eucharist, 247
The covenantal relationship captures the biblical understanding of memory advanced by many scholars. There is in biblical (Judaism and Christian) memory the notion of reciprocal remembering between God and humanity. The assembly remembers the great deeds of God with a view that God remembers God’s own work toward the people. Moreover God is implored to remember his work in the past, which was done for human beings despite their infidelity. It is important to acknowledge that once thanks, glory, and blessing have been rendered to God for God’s work that reached its culmination in the paschal mystery, the celebrating assembly through the use of symbols of bread and wine remembers the sacrifice of Christ and makes it present to the assembly here and now. The paschal mystery and the entire sacrifice of Christ’s life are made present to the community through the narrative of institution and through remembrance. It is here that the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is very important because through the “offering” of the elements of bread and wine, the assembly remembers and more importantly participates in a ritual manner in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ inaugurated by the “private passion” and completed in the sacrifice of the Cross.

This form of memorial is more than just “a psychological remembering of the sacrifice of Christ (against a naïve realism), but as a making present, a representation (Vergenwärtigung) of the perfect, once-for-all (as the epistle to the Hebrews emphasized) sacrifice of Christ.” The memorial more than bringing the Last Supper and the sacrifice of the Cross to the people here and now, brings the people themselves to the sacrifice of Christ through the ritual offering of

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67 Xavier Léon Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 186, Léon Dufour by the phrase “private passion” means all the events done in private by Jesus and his disciples a night before he died in which the Supper and Gethsemane as the climax form the indispensable prelude to the “public Passion.”

68 Robert Daly, “Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives,” in *Theological Studies,* No. 64 (2003), 38
bread and wine. Kilmartin understands the Catholic “sacramental representation” of the sacrifice of Christ within the context of the rule of prayer. He argues that “a valuable clue to the correct interpretation is indeed supplied by the law of prayer. For it is evident that the orientation of the Eucharistic Prayer is from the ecclesial assembly to the Father of Jesus Christ. From this point of view it appears that the eucharistic assembly is presented sacramentally to the once-for-all saving event accomplished in Jesus Christ for the sake of humanity.”

In the narrative of institution we find the command of the Lord at the Last Supper: “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24; Luke 22:19). Like Justin, the Apostolic Tradition, attributed to Hippolytus, has as the object of the memorial not only the passion, but also the resurrection. “Remembering therefore his death and resurrection…” Other varied texts include other events like the ascension and the second coming. The Eucharistic Prayer of the Apostolic Tradition is the earliest and probably an influence on many Eucharistic Prayers: remembering has the offering of the assembly for its immediate consequence. The prayer reads: “Remembering therefore his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving thanks because you have held us worthy to stand before you and minister to you.” We find the same order in the Roman Canon: “Calling to mind therefore… ‘We offer you’…”

The anamnesis of the paschal mystery of Christ in its entirety is always linked to offering. Chauvet states that “the anamnesis is the fundamental place of the Church’s offering. The

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Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, 356


Ibid., 35

The Roman Missal: Eucharistic Prayer 1.
anamnesis unfolds, as we have seen, the status of the story of the institution – a story of which the Church is, literally, a development. It expresses the Church’s reception – in the present and as present – of Christ as sacramental body.”

John McKenna is right to say that “the anamnesis makes explicit what is at stake in the institution narrative. The phrase “we offer you” is a key to understanding what is going on. At the very moment that the Church is receiving the sacramental body and blood of Christ it offers them.”

Therefore the celebrating assembly in remembrance of the action of God in history offers back to God what is God’s own: bread and wine. Thus since God has done great things for us by offering God’s very self to us our response is to offer a return-gift. Unfortunately since we don’t have that which we would rightly call our own, then we offer to God God’s own.

Drawing from varied liturgical texts, Robert Cabié sees that many of the texts do not adopt a realistic stance which speaks of the gift in terms of the body and blood of Christ, but only do so in symbolic language. Cabié cites several texts such as: “What is yours, (taken) from what is yours” (… Basil, Chrysostom); “this awe-inspiring and unbloody sacrifice” (James); “we… offer… of the gifts you have bestowed on us, a perfect, holy, and unblemished Victim, the sacred bread of everlasting life and the chalice of eternal salvation (Roman Canon).”

In Cabié’s view, “the gift which the Lord himself made of his life becomes “today” in the action of the celebrating Church.” The actualization of the gift made in the past is achieved through the action of memorial for which symbolically the Church is making itself sacrifice through the sacrifice it

71 Louis-Marie Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence, 276

72 John H. McKenna, “Eucharist and Memorial,” in Worship, 79, No. 6 (2005), 520

73 Ibid., 99
offers. Walter Kasper argues that “the salvific deed, which belongs to the past, is rendered present by means of the liturgy so that it may be placed before God: appeal is made to what God has done in the past so that he too may remember it and bring his own deed to its eschatological fulfillment.”77 The action of remembering looks to the past, making what was done in the past actualized in the life of a completely different generation which still looks to the future for its fulfillment. The memorial brings together three temporal dimensions: past, present and future.

The Hebrew notion of remembrance or memorial (Zikkaron, anamnēsis, memoria) has many meanings but we have opted to make use of a generally accepted Hebrew-Christian notion, Zikkaron. Zikkaron would rightly be conceived as reciprocal remembrance of each other by two partners. We want to bring forward the understanding of Xavier Léon-Dufour that through Zikkaron the past event became present on one hand, and on the other, the cultic assembly and each individual person became present to the past event. Léon-Dufour drawing from the story of the Exodus postulates that “the encounter of the people with God in the liturgy so clearly entails a ‘presence’ here and now to God’s great acts that the word ‘see’ can be used in speaking of the cultic action: come, you shall see the acts of God who terrifies human beings by his feats.”78 After the narration of the story of the crossing of the sea in Exodus, the verb that follows is given in present tense, “see,” indicating that the people are in the presence of God as he acts here and now in their own history.

If we remember the passion in the Eucharist as Justin and the Apostolic Tradition seem to suggest then the fruits of the passion become present to the eucharistic assembly. So if the goal

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77 Walter Cardinal Kasper, Sacrament of Unity: The Eucharist and the Church, 92

of that past event, the passion, is to go to “the end of love” (John 13:1) and communion with God, which presupposes the forgiveness of sins, then the assembly is brought into the presence of the eis telos, the final end of love, communion with God and reconciliation through forgiveness of sins. However “the cultic assembly does not imagine that the historical event is repeated in its historical factness, for that is impossible; rather by jointly commemorating it the assembly makes the meaning of that event its own and moves forward into its own future.”79 The action of remembering God and reminding God his great actions in human history as expressed in the eucharistic ritual memorial has at its goal the reestablishment of the covenant relationship where the partners compete only in living love.

The Passover memorial is of great importance in understanding Zikkaron as a memorial that regenerates those remembering. Drawing deeply from Chauvet, John H. McKenna writes: “this kind of memory recalls the suffering, the oppression, but also the fight to liberate. There is still hope that tomorrow will be better. Oppressive regimes fear this kind of memory and try to root it out. It is dangerous and liberating memory. In its Passover memorial, Israel receives its past as present, and this gift guarantees a promise of a future.”80 Therefore memory as Zikkaron is extremely important for a world immersed in a culture of violence and death. This is true because like the children of Israel in exile remembering Jerusalem in the midst of the “present ‘death’ it reminds them of their past and God’s promise for the future. This in turn gives hope and gets them back on their feet in the present.”81 We will return to this point because it is so crucial for reconciliation processes. “Theologically, it is the concept of memorial that best

79 Ibid., 107

80 John H. McKenna, “Eucharist and Memorial,” 505

81 Ibid., 505
expresses the historical and the prophetic essence of cult”\textsuperscript{82} because it is the liturgical action that makes the fruits of eucharistic Zikkaron concrete in our world today.

McKenna, summarizing ‘David Power’s’\textsuperscript{83} analysis of varied understandings of memorial in the early patristic period, especially the homilies of an unknown Easter vigil homilist, Cyprian, Irenaeus, and Origen, came up with conclusions which reflected the influence memorial had on their theology and eucharistic celebration. The common elements are: “1) this memorial is a way of participating in Christ’s paschal mystery; 2) an understanding of the passion and the Eucharist go hand in hand; 3) the context of their understanding is one of practical concerns and interests broader than the eucharistic memorial; 4) the practical concerns – such as spirituality, protection in time of martyrdom, and defense of faith – account for the differences of the four theologies.”\textsuperscript{84} Whatever the direction the reflections took, all converged on one central issue that in the Eucharist through memorial, Christ’s paschal mystery and its fruits were sacramentally made present to the liturgical assembly. The Assembly in turn, through remembering the past in its present, looked for its final fulfillment in the future. This has great pastoral implications for the Church because remembering spurs the Church to a return-gift of thanksgiving and ethical Christian living. The observance of the memorial command of the Last Supper is not just a repetition of Jesus’ words and meal because, as in Gregory Dix’s view,\textsuperscript{85} the disciples would have repeated it in any case because it was a Jewish ritual meal. True repetition lies in doing

\textsuperscript{82} Louis-Marie Chauvet, Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence, 231

\textsuperscript{83} David N. Powers, The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition, (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 48-49

\textsuperscript{84} John H. McKenna, “Eucharist and Memorial,” 507

\textsuperscript{85} Dom Gregory Dix, The Shape of Liturgy, 56, he argues that in the command, “Do this in remembrance of me,” emphasis must be laid of the second part, “in remembrance of me,” because he is not instituting a new custom but investing a universal Jewish custom with a new and peculiar meaning for his own chabûrah (table fellows).
what Christ was for the disciples and for the entire humanity. Therefore the disciples’ memorial was supposed be a living experience of how Jesus lived and died. Putting it in another way is to term it as living-in-grace toward their brothers and sisters. Moreover memorial should lead to imitation (discipleship) and participation (one body, one Spirit in Christ). The command to commemorate extends beyond the liturgical celebration into authentic Christian living.

Let us conclude the reflection on memory by recognizing Johann Baptist Metz and Bruce T. Morrill’s contributions especially Morrill’s prophetic character of liturgical memorial. Johann Baptist Metz finds in the memory of the passion and death of Jesus Christ on the Cross and in the resurrection (memoria passionis, mortis, et resurrectionis Jesu Christi) a dangerous memory. The thesis of Metz is that “the Church must understand itself and prove itself as the public witness and bearer of a dangerous memory of freedom in the ‘systems’ of our emancipatory society,” a society that promises cheap freedom or liberation. Through faith, Christians as bearers of a dangerous memory of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection announce to the systems of society God’s coming dominion as the liberating power of an unconditional love, as the true freedom the world needs.

Metz makes an important point that Christ’s passion, death and resurrection form the central memory of Christian remembering. It remembers the uncomfortable memory of oppression, suffering and death but with hope for the future. Memory of Christ is not a bourgeois hope that promises a future that is devoid of risks and believes that we can instrumentally channel the course of our history of liberation autonomously. Rather memoria Jesu Christi opens us to see that the future is also the future of the hopeless, the vanquished and oppressed.

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“In this way it is a dangerous and liberating memory, which badgers the present and calls it into question, since it does not remember just any open future, but precisely this future and because it compels believers to be in a continual state of transformation in order to take this future into account.”87 In other words, Christian faith has to be seen as this kind of subversive memoria in which unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness are presented to us as the new way to freedom.

The memory of freedom enshrined in the passion of Christ is none other than “take it; this is my body… This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many” (Mk 14:22-24) or “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). It is the memory of Christ’s total self-sacrifice for the life of many. Metz argues that such being the case the history of freedom (remembering the memoria passionis and the memoria resurrectionis) helps Christians not to be quickly carried away or reconciled with the facts and trends of technological society which believes that we can fix everything mechanically. “It becomes a dangerous-liberating memory over and against the mechanisms and forces of the ruling consciousness and its abstract ideal of emancipation.”88 In short the memory of the passion is a repulsive one that no one can appropriate to his/her own advantage. It is the type of memory which interrupts us from the lie which promises cheap discipleship. It needs a real conversion of heart to see that this memory is an invitation to authentic self-giving discipleship.

Christian faith with its source in the memoria passionis and memoria resurrectionis is a hope for the oppressed, the living and the dead. Metz defines Christian faith as a “solidaristic hope,”89 a type of solidarity that engages the subject in relation to other subjects and these

87 Ibid., 89
88 Ibid., 108
89 Ibid., 84
subjects range from those who have died in the past especially those who suffered oppression and victimization, the living in the present and those of the future generation. This hope is set in the preaching of the Church which points to God’s universal justice which is found in the resurrection of the dead. This must be understood in terms of God’s solidarity with the victims: God’s justice, which is deeper than simply the vindication of victims and condemnation of victimizers. This is a form of justice which reconciles both the victim and the oppressor because it is the type of justice that presupposes mercy even for the enemy. Therefore solidaristic hope opens a Christian not only to hope for oneself alone but also for the dead, the coming generation and for all the living, including the enemy. Therefore faith entails a practical solidarity or ethics which opens the believer to a revolutionary character on behalf of everyone and on one’s own accord. “The hope that Christians have in the God of the living and the dead, in God’s power to raise the dead, is the hope for a revolution on behalf of everyone, those who suffer unjustly, those long ago forgotten, indeed, even the dead”90 The history of freedom must be carried out while remembering the eschatological *provisio* (already and not yet) which does not promise the plenitude of freedom this-worldly.

Bruce Morrill, drawing deeply from the insights of Metz and Schmemann, concludes that Christian anamnesis as living and actualizing the memory of Christ’s continued presence, grounded in solidarity with Christ who poured out his life definitively for us on the Cross, is lived out in liturgy. For Morrill the Church cannot be singing alleluia commemorating the risen Christ while relegating to the periphery the crucified Christ. It is for this that Morrill comes to the conclusion that the kenosis of Christ is very important for Christian ethical living. “Through the commemoration which the disciples will make of him, this ‘real’ presence of Jesus will light

90 Ibid., 84
up, from within, the night of the passion that lasts through the centuries in countless sufferings of
human beings and their real dying.”\textsuperscript{91} Therefore Christians should:

Perceive themselves now as continuously in the “passage” from death to life, for Jesus was in that
passage on the night he gave them a share in his very life, his mission of kenotic service to
humanity in faithful communion with God. The Liturgy is the manifestation and proclamation of
God’s faithfulness and love to the kenotic servant Jesus, whom God has now raised up in
 glory.”\textsuperscript{92}

The resource for kenotic Christian ethical living lies in the “experiential knowledge of God
which comes in the practice of Christian mysticism, of which the eucharistic celebration is
central.”\textsuperscript{93} In other words, Christian faith calls us to imitate the kenosis of Christ on the Cross.

This imitation entails making our own in Morrill’s view the pattern of Christ’s selfless
action on behalf of the freedom for everyone, living and dead. Therefore it is important to note
that the anamnesis, comprising of the summary of the paschal mystery and the eschatological
\textit{provisio} or hope, is the subject of the entire eucharistic celebration. “The performance of
narrative gesture, in the power of the Spirit of the crucified and risen Lord, creates the living
memory of God in the community of the faithful, who carry out the grace of the covenant in the
world.”\textsuperscript{94} The role of the Holy Spirit is necessary in remembering rightly the paschal mystery in
its unity and the eschatological \textit{provisio} which presupposes that the Church will make present the
grace of the covenant in the world until its fulfillment when Christ comes again. The anamnesis
as a dangerous memory makes present the dangerous forgiving and loving endeavor of God in
Christ. Thus, the realization that Christian memory is a memory of the reconciling death of

\textsuperscript{91} Bruce T. Morrill, \textit{Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue}, (Collegeville,

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 186

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 188

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 186
Christ should be the reason why the Eucharist must be the place of reconciliation and the invitation to work for reconciliation.

4.2.3 Invocation (epiclesis) of the Holy Spirit

The route taken in the eucharistic celebration “turns between the ritual memorial of the body of Christ given for the remission of sins (narrative-anamnesis) and the petition that the body of the Church be built up through the remission of sins.” Moreover “corresponding to the todâh, the Eucharistic Prayer expresses the relational otherness of the two partners. To confess sin in the content of the covenant discourse is to recall to God his great works and to proclaim his constant fidelity to the liturgical assembly.” Narrative-anamnesis is not complete without the epiclesis or the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only invoked to transform the eucharistic elements but more importantly to transform those who take part in the celebration so that they may be reconciled to God and to one another. Such being the case, “focusing on God and on human beings at the same time, the Eucharistic Prayer creates a strong vertical tension, which, however, will not be authentic if it lacks verification in daily life. The vertical and horizontal dimensions so interpenetrate one another in the classical Eucharistic Prayers that one is not given without the other.”

In the Eucharist following Augustine the subject of offering is the Totus Christus, the total Christ, head and its members. Since the head and members offer themselves in the Eucharist, then Augustine comes alive in his statement that “this is the sacrifice of Christians:

95 Edward J. Kilmartin, The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology, 355
96 Ibid., 355
97 Ibid., 355
we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this is also the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar… in which the Church teaches that it itself is offered in the offering it makes to God.™ Augustine’s view beautifully as he writes: “For in its reality, the eucharistic sacrifice is the sacrament of the sacrifice of the ecclesial body as such, that is, inseparably, of the sacrifice of Christ as head surrounding the sacrifice of its members and of the sacrifice of members incorporated into that of their head, which was offered ‘once for all.’” Augustine uses the term “body” to designate three things: historical body of Christ (Jesus of Nazareth), the sacramental body of Christ (the “pneumatic” body and blood of Christ or consecrated bread and wine) and the ecclesial body of Christ (the Church). For Augustine it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the formation of all these bodies. Therefore through the epiclesis in our Eucharistic Prayers, the Holy Spirit is invoked first to transform the elements of bread and wine into the eucharistic body of Christ and then to transform the participants or the assembly into the ecclesial body of Christ, both as sacraments of the historical body of Christ.

We have argued above for the unity of the anamnesis-offering and the narrative of institution. This section will try to show that this unity is incomplete without the unity of the epiclesis and the intercessions. Moreover the epiclesis completes the circle of the Trinity’s involvement in the eucharistic event. God’s salvific action or God’s self-communication according to Karl Rahner is never complete without God’s two inseparable hands: “Jesus Christ

98 Augustine of Hippo, City of God, 10.6, tr. Marcus Dods, (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 2009)

and the Holy Spirit.”

McKenna argues that the epiclesis is a prayer made to the Father, and calling on Christ to be present, through the power of the Spirit in the eucharistic gifts and in the assembly. Through this prayer “we are being drawn into the life, the love, of the self-communicating triune God at work within us…the activity of the divine persons bringing human persons into trinitarian communion.”

The Holy Spirit is the condition of possibility of human participation into the trinitarian communion. Understanding the whole movement in terms of the relationship of love between the Father and Son in the triune circle where the Spirit is the bond of that love is very important in making sense of the meaning of the eucharistic epiclesis. The Holy Spirit is a seal of our reconciliation with God for he makes us sharers in God’s riches. The Spirit marks us to be God’s people or according to the letter of Paul to the Ephesians: “In him (Christ) you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).

Jerome Hall points that if God the Father is a relational being, then the Son’s self-giving relational attitudes are part of Son’s being. Therefore “the choices that Jesus made, his history as person-for-others, are, according to a relational ontology, the means by which he realized himself in time and space. Whenever the glorified Christ is personally present, the temporal actions that make up his personal self-realization would… be said to be present as well.”

This is worked out through the Spirit, who is the bond of love. The Holy Spirit is also the condition of possibility of human relation to Christ who in his love is responsible for the return of human beings and the

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100 Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, 39


entire creation to the Father, his primary relationship. McKenna, citing Pope Benedict XVI, says that “the greatest proof that we are all made in the image of the Trinity is that only love makes us happy, because we live to love and be loved.”\textsuperscript{103} The Holy Spirit unites the members of the assembly so that together they may participate in the loving sacrifice of Christ, in the life of God and in one another’s life.

It is interesting to see how McKenna argues for a wide involvement of the Spirit in the events of Christ’s life (incarnation), suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and most of all his continued presence in the Eucharist. It is here that McKenna states:

The same Spirit who permeated Jesus of Nazareth – now the risen, Spirit-filled Lord – is in the process of bringing Christ’s work to fulfillment. It is the epiclesis proper that gives voice to the Spirit’s role in the accomplishment of Christ’s life-giving function in Eucharist. The epiclesis makes it clear that without the Holy Spirit the eucharistic, “pneumatic” body and blood of Christ are not present. It is the epiclesis which underscores the Holy Spirit’s role in “Spirit-izing” the bread and wine and making them objective means of salvation for those who properly partake of them.\textsuperscript{104}

McKenna in using the term “Spirit-izing,” wants to highlight that the Spirit makes Christ present through sacramental transformation of the gifts and that the Holy Spirit indwells the hearts of the faithful to make them accept Christ’s sacramental presence. Therefore the Spirit offers the sacramental presence and at the same time it is the Spirit who makes the celebrating assembly to accept this offer as God’s presence in the celebration of the Eucharist. In other words, the Spirit transforms the elements into the real or sacramental presence of Christ, the sacramental body. This is one side of the coin while the other is that “the eucharistic epiclesis thus makes it clear that the Eucharist is there so that the Holy Spirit may fill, may “Spirit-ize” the faithful as the


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 179
Spirit has already “Spirit-ized” Christ and the gifts.¹⁰⁵ For McKenna a full epiclesis has two inseparable parts: the transformation of the gifts and transformation of the faithful. This is more than just asking that the participants in the liturgy should become one body one Spirit in Christ, but also that this transformation into the body of Christ is meant for ministry. The other way of saying it is that communion is for mission, which is an aspect implicitly said, but explicitly lacking in the Roman Catholic prayers of epiclesis.

Without underestimating the transformation of the gifts into the ontological reality of the body and blood of Christ, the goal of the epiclesis is the transformation of the assembled faithful. McKenna has reminded us that in the early Eucharistic Prayers the transformation of the gifts has its goal the sanctification of the faithful. For example “The Liturgy of Saints Addai and Mari,”¹⁰⁶ the prayer only asks the Holy Spirit to come and rest on the offering, to bless and sanctify it so that “it may be to us, Lord, for remission of debt, forgiveness of sins, and the great hope of resurrection from the dead, and new life in the kingdom of heaven, with all who have been pleasing in your sight.”¹⁰⁷ The transformation of the gifts is taken for granted, as an obvious aspect, but emphasis is laid on the transformation of the assembly through the reception of the gifts to become what they receive. Augustine, speaking to the neophytes on an Easter morning, tells them that “you are the body of Christ, and his members (1 Cor. 12:27). If, therefore, you are the body of Christ and his members, your mystery has been placed on the Lord’s Table, you

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 179

¹⁰⁶ The dates of the composition of this liturgy are not known but it originated in Edessa but researchers like E. C Ratcliff believes it is one of the earliest Christian liturgies. The liturgy was, unusually composed in Syriac, with a Nestorian influence, cf. Jasper & Cuming, Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed, 39

receive your mystery.”¹⁰⁸ This understanding has great implications for the theology of eucharistic real presence. In McKenna’s view “the eucharistic epiclesis can underscore the unity of ‘consecration,’ in the narrower sense, and communion. It is no accident that by far the majority of the epiclesis examined ask that the gifts be transformed so that those partaking may benefit.”¹⁰⁹ The “real presence” of Christ in the gift has its goal the real presence of Christ in the transformation of the assembly celebrating the Eucharist. This is not to undermine the real presence in the gifts, but to show that sacramental real presence does not bear fruit and/or is incomplete without the transformation of the assembly into the body of Christ.

It is imperative to recognize two inseparable outcomes of the relation of the two transformations taking place at the celebration of the Eucharist. The first is that it is God who transforms the gifts for the benefit of the assembly. The second aspect is that God realizes the Eucharist through the faith and prayer of the assembly. Through the assembly’s lex orandi and lex credendi the assembly itself receives the unmerited real presence of Christ in the gifts. Inasmuch as the traditional understanding of the ontological “real presence” or the ontological change of the gifts of bread and wine is important, our survey of the relational character of the Godhead invites us also to consider a more personalistic approach to real presence. Like McKenna we recognize the contribution of the theologians who take a more personalistic view of consecration as worthwhile. “That is an approach which uses a basic analogy of the inter-subjective relations between two persons rather than the change of one physical substance into another. Such an approach stresses the ultimate reciprocal nature of the “real presence and thus

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Sheerin, The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church, 95

reflects, among other things, the relational image of the Trinity.”\textsuperscript{110} The consequence of the personalistic understanding of the real presence is that it goes hand in hand with ethics: peace, unity, reconciliation, hope for the resurrection and hope for final fulfillment in the kingdom. There is nowhere like in the epiclesis that the Church prays for unity, reconciliation, and charity.

Thus, the epiclesis connects better the thanksgiving to the Father for his saving actions, the memorial of the Son’s life, the paschal mystery in its entirety, and the transformation of the assembly into the body of Christ in the world. It is the epiclesis that shows that the invocation of the Holy Spirit has as its purpose to take the assembly back in memory to the Cross so that the grace of the Cross may unite the assembly with the triune God and with each other as a body of Christ for/and in the world. This process is initiated and intensified at liturgy as we have already seen above in Chauvet’s conception that we come to participate in the eucharistic body by receiving the sacramental body of Christ so that we may be formed into the ecclesial body of Christ.

McKenna argues that a full epiclesis needs to have the following features: “1) an appeal to the Holy Spirit; 2) to transform or sanctify the bread and wine; 3) so that they benefit those who partake of them worthily.”\textsuperscript{111} This shows two aspects: consecration and communion of the recipients. Advancing the inter-subjective approach, we argue that the danger of McKenna’s categorization is that the epiclesis only asks the Holy Spirit for the transformation of the gifts and the benefit of recipients to be gathered into one without a specific clause that this gathering is meant for mission. The prayer for personal transformation and union with Christ without any indication of our involvement in the world lacks an aspect of ministry.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 192-200

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 228
E. Byron Anderson applies the same critique we have just made to McKenna’s threefold features of the epiclesis to both Methodist and Anglican communities who for a long time prayed for the personal transformation than the union and unity in Christ. “The focus on individual communion with Christ and on personal benefit of the forgiveness of sins has done little to counteract the modern individualism found both in the Church and beyond. At the end of the day, it would not be wrong to say that the history of the Eucharistic prayer in the Western Church reveals a history of the diminishing significance of the pneumatological force of the Eucharistic Prayer.”

It is for this that Anderson advises that it is important to look beyond the questions of consecration and communion in dealing with the epiclesis in order to consider ethics that should flow from consecration and communion.

Citing *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), Anderson argues that “the Church, as the community of the new covenant, confidently invokes the Spirit, in order that it may be sanctified and renewed, led into justice, truth and unity, and empowered to fulfill its mission in the world.” Anderson prides himself that the recent ‘United Methodist’ epiclesis puts together consecration, communion and mission as it reads: “Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world that body of Christ, redeemed by Christ’s blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry with all the world.” Therefore the Eucharist is also for the transformation of the entire world to which the communicants, united into one, will go to transform so that it may become one with them, the

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113 Ibid., 104

114 Ibid., 106
body of Christ. We hinted at this aspect in the second chapter when we argued that it is the Eucharist which will draw all creation back to God. The return journey back to God initiated by the Eucharist is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit. Consequently what grounds our project of reconciliation in the Eucharist is the epiclesis in its missionary aspect of drawing all creation back to God by the hand of the assembly united with and in Christ.

We resonate with the argument of Anderson who cites Chauvet’s treatment of sacraments in general. Chauvet for pastoral reasons argues that taking into account the role of the Spirit in sacraments offers us a dynamic opening to history and to the Church:

First, the opening to history because the breath of the Spirit impels the sacraments to verify what they symbolize, by having Christians take responsibility for history, that is to say, practice the ethics of service to others. We have said above that this service is the primary locus of worship or the ‘spiritual sacrifice’ which – provided it is energized by faith – keeps strong the communion of believers with God. Second, an opening to the Church, connects each member through the sacraments to the ‘body of Christ’ and thus counteracts the temptation of individualistic participation. It is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for uniting us with Christ in worship, so that united with and in Christ, we may be ambassadors of Christ in reconciling the entire creation to God by our faith working through love. Therefore there is no salvation for one individual without others: to think of being saved alone without others, even those who hurt us, is no better than being damned.

In conclusion, through the epiclesis “we ask to be formed into Christ’s body by the Spirit for the sake of ministry in the world. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit for the work of healing, compassion, reconciliation, justice, and peace. We are led by the Spirit into God’s

At the heart of reconciliation is the Holy Spirit who forms us into “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jürgen Moltmann argues that:

It is the Spirit who allows Christ to be truly present in the meal and gives us fellowship with him in bread and wine in accordance with the words of institution. It is the Spirit who, as the power of the kingdom, gives a foretaste of the new creation in the feast. Through him the fellowship of the table receives the life and the powers of the new creation and assurance of the coming Kingdom.117

Moltmann describes “the Lord’s Supper as the mark of the history of the Spirit.”118 This means that the Holy Spirit is present in the thanksgiving to the Father, in the memorial of the Son and in the communion or incorporation into Christ that happens not only with the Eucharist, but also fundamentally by baptism. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the transformation that takes place in the elements of offering and the transformation of the assembly into a reconciled body of Christ. The transformation of the assembly by the Spirit into the body of Christ at worship is of paramount importance for the theology of reconciliation: first of all it presupposes reconciliation between the participants with Christ, then, among the participants, and finally with the public sphere or the whole world.

4.2.4 Communion of the Faithful with/in Christ

We have argued that through the power of the Holy Spirit we can make a dynamic correspondence between the sacramental body and ecclesial body of Christ, but also with the historical body of the incarnate Son of God and Mary. This correspondence is possible in the celebration of the Eucharist where the faithful are united by the breaking of one loaf of bread and by sharing in one cup (1Cor. 10:17). This is to argue that partaking of the broken bread and the

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118 Ibid., 257
shared cup has as its goal union with with/in Christ. Union with Christ through eating of the consecrated elements presupposes a loving union with all those for whom Christ had his body broken, his blood shed. Consequently, the Eucharist is a ritual of mutual love among believers and by extension the entire world. It is for this that Paul sees participation in the eucharistic meal as at the same time participation into the one who is sacramentally eaten in the meal, Christ. To eat of Christ sacramentally in the presence of division, injustice, and untouched by concern for the poor, is to fracture the body of Christ, which we are called to build as living stones. Tillard, surveying early Eucharistic praying in relation to communion, cites the Didache 9.4 to conclude that the prayer of the Church rests on the sign of bread as sacrament of communion of all people in the kingdom of God. The Didache depicts the reality of communion in a very interesting way: “As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may Thy church be gathered from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom.”

The unity of the Church in the kingdom of God is linked to the whole process of acquiring bread, which involves sowing seeds of wheat, harvest, kneading, and baking. In other words, what the Didache is trying to get at is that the eucharistic bread gives the Church its own unity or rather that the Eucharist is a source of unity for the Church.

Secondly, the Eucharist is a source of God’s forgiveness and mercy, a perfect way of being in communion with God. Tillard finds in the “Euchologion” of Sarapion of Thmuis (ca. 359), the same quotation from the Didache reflecting the importance of the Eucharist for communion with God and one another in the Church through forgiveness and mercy. Tillard

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120 The Euchologion is a collection of prayer attributed to Sarapion, a bishop of Thmuis in the Nile delta dated c. 359. Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ, 35 or R.C.D. Jasper and G.J. Cuming, 74
qoutes, “therefore we also offered the bread making the likeness of the death. And we implore you through this sacrifice, God of truth: be reconciled to us and be merciful. *And as this bread was scattered over... so also gather your holy Church out of every nation and every city and village and house, and make one living catholic church.*”

Here the *Euchologion* shows that communion is not possible without the forgiveness of sins and merciful love. The same quotation is found in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 7.25.3., showing that it is around the eucharistic bread that what is scattered and divided by sin is reconciled and united with God into a body.

Cyprian in letter 63.13, responding to a question whether it is normal to use only water in the cup for the celebration of the Eucharist, brings out forcefully the unity between Christians and Christ on one hand, and on the other, unity among Christians themselves. For Cyprian wine mixed with water in the cup is a symbol of unity between the divine (wine) and the human (water). Cyprian’s letter 63.13 makes clear the unity of the Church with and in Christ at the table of the Lord, symbolized by the mixing of water and wine.

Thus, in truth, the chalice of the Lord is not water alone, or wine alone, unless both are mixed together just as flour alone or water alone cannot be the body of the Lord unless both have been united and joined and made solid in the structure of one bread. By this sacrament itself, our people are shown to be united; just as many grains collected in one and united and mixed form one bread, so in Christ, who is the heavenly bread, we may know is one body, to which our number is joined and united.

For Cyprian the mixing of water and wine represents the unity of the divine and the human made possible by the eucharistic meal. Consequently unity with Christ also calls for the unity of all those that are joined to this one body.

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121 Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*: 36

122 Ibid., 37
Cyril of Jerusalem departing from the realism of the words of the Last Supper according to Paul, take; eat; this is my body… take; drink; this is my blood, concludes that in doing so Christians in a sacramental form become of the same body and blood with Christ. Through eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ we become partakers of divine nature. Owen Cummings beautifully brings to our attention Cyril’s use of Greek words in the phrase, “the same body and the same blood with him.” In Greek it is actually two words, *syssomos* and *synaimos.*"\(^{123}\) Cummings argues that it takes nine English words to convey the idea of *syssomos* (same body) and *synaimos* (same blood). These words suggest a profoundly dynamic union that occurs between the communicants and Christ through the Eucharist. “These words say something like ‘Christ bodies us with himself, bloods us with himself.’ That sounds cumbersome, but it captures something of the profound union between Christ and the recipient of the Eucharist in the Church. The eucharistic union renders us *koinonoi* with the divine nature… Something like “communioned in and with God” is more literal and better.”\(^{124}\) Through the eating of the body and drinking of the blood of Christ, a believer for Cyril is a *Christopheros*, a *Christopher*, one who bears Christ. “We are *Christified* through the sacraments, centered on the Eucharist.”\(^{125}\) This may sound highly naïve realism, but what is conveyed is that through the Eucharist the life of God is communicated to us and that we are enfolded in that life. God’s self-communication or grace made manifest in the incarnation and the paschal mystery embraces us in the Eucharist. It is for this that, with Cyril, one cannot separate the Eucharist from the incarnation because it is the Eucharist that concretely makes us sharers in God’s life in Christ.

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\(^{124}\) Ibid., 50

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 51
After emphasizing the dynamic union that takes place between Christ and the communicants through eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ, we want to consider another aspect that says more about union with others, which springs from communion and consecration. Out of a multitude of evidence let us consider two essential figures. The first is John Chrysostom in his homily on the gospel of Matthew writes.

Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk only then to neglect him outside where he suffers cold and nakedness. He who said: “This is my body,” is the same one who said: “You saw me hungry and you gave me no food,” and “Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me… What good is it if the eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices, when he is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger, and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.126

In Chrysostom’s view to receive the Eucharist or to participate at the table of the Lord without paying attention to the liturgy of the neighbor, the hunger, the pain of others, the divisions in our world, is to receive communion unworthily because it is to injure the very essence of the body, a unity of members of Christ. You cannot receive the body of Christ and fail to recognize a brother or sister in need, or let alone eat of the body of Christ while having a grudge against your brother/sister. Above all you cannot be judgmental at the table of the Lord because this table is set because we have all sinned and have been enslaved by the forces of sin. It is in this context of human brokenness that Christ prepares a table for all. Jesus was fully aware of the brokenness of his disciples, he gave the Eucharist under the shadow of the Cross, with the man who will betray him and the disciples who will abandon him.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is clear that one of the fruits of the Eucharist is the forgiveness of sins. “The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is ‘given up for us,’ and the blood we drink ‘shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.’ For this reason the Eucharist

126 John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew, No. 50:3-4
cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins.”\footnote{Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), No. 1393} The Catechism goes on to cite Ambrose: “For as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord. If we proclaim the Lord’s death, we proclaim the forgive-ness of sins. If, as often as his blood is poured out, it is poured for the forgiveness of sins, I should always receive it, so that it may always forgive my sins. Because I always sin, I should always have a remedy.”\footnote{Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), No. 1393} The Eucharist is a sacrament given amidst brokenness in order to heal the wounds of this brokenness and allowing the partaker to share in the life of the giver.

Chrysostom again says that “you have tasted the blood of the Lord, yet you do not recognize your brother… You dishonor this table when you do not judge worthy of sharing your food someone is judged worthy to take part in this meal… God freed you from all your sins and invited you here, but you have not become more merciful.”\footnote{John Chrysostom, Homily on 1 Corinthians, No. 27.5,} Eating of the Eucharist must make us more merciful and forgiving: “and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you (Eph. 4:32). Therefore to judge others as unworthy of the table is to pay no attention to the sacrifice of Christ whose merciful love was expressed in sharing meals all through his ministry. However we are not proposing indiscriminate communion in the body of Christ but, we want to emphasize unity in and with Christ since Church communion is based on the unity of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. Moreover the Eucharist is a culmination of our initiation into the sacramental and ecclesial body of Christ. Giving the Eucharist to everyone who appears at the celebration without considering the
presence of divisions among Christian undermines the whole point of communion with and in Christ.

Augustine champions the connection between the Eucharist and unity, as we have already referred to him on several occasions. However in Easter sermon 227 he argues that anyone who partakes of the bread and wine given to us by the Lord as his body and blood must love unity. Augustine writes:

The bread which you see on the altar, sanctified by God’s word, is the body of Christ. The cup, or rather its contents, sanctified by God’s word, is the blood of Christ. Through these Christ our Lord wished to bequeath his body and his blood which he shed for us for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:28). If you received worthily, you are what you received. For the Apostle says: “We though many, are one bread, one body (I Cor. 10:7). Thus did he explain the sacrament of the Lord’s table, “We though many, we are one bread, one body.” By means of this bread he impresses on you how you must love unity.  

Augustine in sermon 272 reiterates the same words of Paul about one bread and one body in Christ as an expression of unity and charity. “We though many, are one body” (1 Cor 10:17). Understand and rejoice. Unity! Verity! Piety! Charity! “One bread.” What is this one bread? “Many… One body.” Remember that it is not made from one grain, but from many.”

In his *Treatise on the Gospel of John* (Treatise XXVI), Augustine seals his signature acclamation to the greatness of the mystery of the Eucharist as he exclaims, “O Sacrament of piety! O sign of unity! O bond of charity!” Thomas Aquinas in the same vein acclaims the Eucharist as “the sacrament of charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. 3:14).” Augustine compares the entire catechetical process to the whole process of baking one loaf of bread as sign

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130 Daniel Sheerin, *The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church*, 96

131 *Ibid.*, 96

132 Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John*, No. XXVI

133 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, Q. 73, a. 3
of unity created from many grains of wheat. “When you were exorcized you were, after a
fashion, milled. When you were baptized you were moistened. When you received the fire of the
Holy Spirit you were baked. Be what you see, and receive what you are.”¹³⁴ The formation into
one body in Augustine’s allegory encompasses baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, in which
the neophytes shared the previous night on Easter vigil. They have become part of the body of
Christ. In other words, the mystery of the altar has actually become the mystery of their own
being, a unity of many members to a head.

Beverly A. Nitschke makes an important point as she relates the ecclesial unity at liturgy
to forgiveness and reconciliation.

It is in the eucharistic celebration that the ecclesial dimension of reconciliation is set forth most
clearly. It signifies a mystery of encounter – a mystery of encounter involving not only the body
with its head, but also the totality of the created world of which we are part. This mystery of
encounter is the mystery of love that draws the assembly out of itself and toward the other. The
experience of eating together, in an atmosphere of celebration, is redolent of a meeting in love, a
mutual opening forth, and advance beyond mere intrinsic individual existence, and therefore…
reconciliation.¹³⁵

Nitschke argues that if the unity of the assembly with Christ and among members is the goal of
every eucharistic celebration, then it follows that the Eucharist is a sacrament of forgiveness and
reconciliation.

The Eucharist symbolizes the unity of the Church and, by extension, the unity of all humankind.
This is its chief significance and effect. All other effects derive from it. In this light forgiveness
and reconciliation are seen in their proper context – as the necessary fruits of deeper
incorporation into the body of Christ with its accompanying social and, for that matter, political
implications. Deeper incorporation into the one body of Christ both presupposes and demands
reconciliation if we, as members of that body, are to serve as agents of forgiveness and
reconciliation in the world.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Daniel Sheerin, The Eucharist: Message of the Fathers of the Church, 95
¹³⁵ Beverly A. Nitschke, “Eucharist: Forgiveness of Sins or Reconciliation?” Liturgical Ministry, 1 (Summer, 1992), 88
¹³⁶ Ibid., 91
Mitchell draws very interesting conclusions for his reflection on the relationship between the Eucharist and communion. The first is that communion is essential to the sacramental integrity of the Eucharist. Mitchell argues that from the early centuries of Christianity communion was at the heart and center of the ritual of which remembers and proclaims the death of the Lord until he comes. “Thus, our ancestors believed that we can participate in communion with the “mystical body and blood” only if we first participate in that primordial presence of Christ which is the plebs sancta, the holy people of God, the celebrating assembly, the Church gathered in the power of the Spirit for sacramental prayer.”\(^{137}\) Therefore since communion is at the heart of the eucharistic praying throughout the ages, Mitchell basing on the insight found in Justin Martyr concludes that “Communion can happen apart from the Eucharist, but Eucharist can’t happen apart from communion.”\(^{138}\) The Eucharist cannot meaningfully happen without forgiveness of sins, without merciful justice, without peace and reconciliation.

In conclusion, the Fathers of the Church in most of their writings valued this conception of the eucharistic celebration as an act of incorporation into Christ and one another. The consequences of this understanding are manifold because it enables us to see in every eucharistic praying the freedom and joy that come with being grafted into Christ and through Christ into one another. “All forgiveness bestowed in the Church derives from and is oriented to the Eucharist. The freedom to confess is one of those gifts that the sacrament gives us precisely in order to build up the community in love, for the sacrament has no blessing and significance unless love grows daily and so changes a person that he/she is made one with all others.”\(^{139}\)

\(^{137}\) Nathan Mitchell, “History of the Relationship between Eucharist and Communion,” in Liturgical Ministry, 13 (Spring 2004), 63, the italics are from Mitchell himself.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., 63

\(^{139}\) Beverly A. Nitschke, “Eucharist: Forgiveness of Sins or Reconciliation?” 92
Eucharist has fruits for individual persons in the assembly, eucharistic liturgy should always be a corporate action of forgiveness and reconciliation at a very deeper level of being. Since the Eucharist is the sacrament of incorporation into Christ and his body, then, every eucharistic liturgy must convey the fruits of the Eucharist which in this case are forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. Let us end this section with a quotation from Didache 14 in order to emphasize the importance of the forgiveness of sins. Didache 14.1 points out that the forgiveness of sins is necessary for the purity of the eucharistic event. “On the Lord’s Day of the Lord, come together, break bread, and give thanks, having first confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.”\textsuperscript{140}

### 4.2.5 The Eucharist as an Eschatological Banquet

The meal character of the Eucharist is very important for understanding themes of the final reconciliation of the entire creation with God. The meal brings together three most important themes, namely, God’s hospitality which welcomes everyone, reconciliation of the sinners and the marginalized, and that commensality charges us with missionary labor to establish the reign of God. Dom Gregory Dix argues that the eschatological conceptions of the reign of God in the ministry of Jesus, especially in the meals he shared with different people must be understood in relation to pre-Christian Jewish notions of the \textit{eschaton} (end times). There are two interrelated aspects to the whole idea of the reign or the kingdom of God in pre-Christian Jewish thought about the \textit{eschaton}: “(1) it manifested the purpose of history, and (2) it also concluded it.”\textsuperscript{141} In this mentality history is linear, with the “the Day of the Lord” as the answer to the agonizing problem of history. The day of the Lord manifests the kingship of God over

\textsuperscript{140} The Didache 14.1, \textit{Ancient Christian Writers}, 25

\textsuperscript{141} Dom Gregory Dix, \textit{The Shape of Liturgy}, (London, Adam & Charles Black Publishers, 1982), 261
history within and at the end of it all. “All the divine values implicit and fragmentary in history are gathered up and revealed in the eschaton, which is the ‘the End’ to which history moves. In this case the ‘Day of the Lord’ involves a ‘judgment’ of history as a whole, and all that goes to make up history. ‘The End’ is at once within history and beyond it, the consummation of time and its transmutation into what is beyond time, the ‘Age to come.’”\textsuperscript{142} The eschaton presupposes the breaking into history of a Messiah. “Through the Messiah God would thus ‘redeem’ Israel from its own sins and the failures, as well as from sorrow and catastrophes of temporary history.”\textsuperscript{143}

On the other hand, according to Dix, the Greek mentality understands eschatology by looking at history as cyclical. “Probably this was ultimately due to the influence of Babylonian astronomy and its theory of a periodical revolution of the eight ‘circles of the heavens’ by which after every ten thousand years all the stars returned to the exact relative position from which they had started, and all the cosmic process begun again.”\textsuperscript{144} This conception is very prominent in the book of Qoheleth: “What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9).

In pre-Christian Jewish notion of eschaton, the kingdom of God was already established in the birth, life and the paschal mystery of Christ, but it is waiting for its final fulfillment in the future. The reign of God is depicted in terms of sharing a festival meal with God. It is probably

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 258
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 259
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 257
for this that some scholars like Eugene LaVerdiere\textsuperscript{145} argue that table fellowship, which marked the entire ministry of Jesus, especially in Luke, is important for understanding the eschatological character of the Eucharist. The gospel of Luke presents seven meals in Jesus’ ministry before the Last Supper, which is the epitome of all these table fellowships. Edward Foley suggests three distinctive contributions to the Eucharist, in view Jesus’ table fellowship during his ministry in the New Testament. The first is an expression of hospitality and inclusivity. The second is reconciliation, which is a central image of what he was doing, and the third is mission. In its eschatological dimension, the eucharistic meal is meant for the reconciliation of the celebrating assembly, who ought to become one body, one Spirit in Christ for the sake of the mission of reconciliation of all things to God in Christ.

There is an inseparable link between hospitality and table fellowship with people of all walks of life in Jesus’ ministry. Foley reminds us that this link is central to Jewish thought going back to the story of the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah to the three strangers (Gen. 18:1-8). This table hospitality according to Foley is also foundational both for the promise of a single child (Gen. 18:10, 14) and for the further promise of blessing for the descendants of Abraham and Sarah: “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him” (Gen. 18:18). God was blessed in the offering of food and drink to the strangers and, in turn, God’s blessing to Israel is reciprocally depicted in terms of table hospitality.”\textsuperscript{146} In Psalms 23, 78, and in the book of Proverbs (Prov. 9:1-5) God is depicted not only as preparing a table for the chosen people, but also inviting all to a table of plenty. This is


\textsuperscript{146} Edward Foley, “Which Jesus Table? Reflections on Eucharistic Starting Points,” \textit{Worship}, 82, No. 1, (January 1, 2008), 43
the reason why the covenant between God and Israel in most cases is sealed by a meal (Exod. 24:9-11). The “mutuality of hospitality and blessing is also a mutuality of hospitality and covenant.” More importantly there is always a challenge in the Old Testament to exclusive hospitality in order to move toward an inclusive hospitality depicted in God’s care for the widow, orphan and even strangers, an attitude Jews are invited to imitate (Deut. 10:17-19).

Foley sees continuity and discontinuity of this broader Jewish hospitality and table inclusivity in Jesus’ table ministry. “What is clear from his expansive meal practice, however, is that Jesus not only embraces the Jewish virtue of inclusivity but sometimes does so in clear contradiction of Jewish law, and more often against the sensibilities of other Jews.” Jesus’ table inclusivity brought in even those considered unclean by Jewish law: tax collectors like Levi and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), probably the Samaritans where he stayed for a few days on his way to Jerusalem (John 4:4-42), prostitutes and sinners (Luke 15). In Edward Schillebeeckx’s words, Jesus is the “eschatological messenger of God’s openness towards sinners.” What brought much trouble wasn’t simply that Jesus ate with objectionable characters but most of all that he ate with anyone indiscriminately. Jesus ate with both the “good” and the bad alike. Citing Mitchell, Foley argues that “the table companionship practiced by Jesus thus recreated the world, redrew all of society’s maps and flow charts. Instead of symbolizing social rank and order, it blurred the distinctions between hosts and guests, need and plenty. Instead of reinforcing rules of etiquette, it subverted them, making the last first and the first last.” In short, Jesus in his meals

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147 Ibid., 43
148 Ibid., 44
150 Edward Foley, “Which Jesus Table? Reflections on Eucharistic Starting Points,” 45
made a new creation by breaking down the barriers. Most of these meals of Jesus are a calling on sinners into fellowship in a manner that sometimes appears to disadvantage the faithful observant of God’s law like in the story of the prodigal son. The elder son in the story is the best expression of the dissatisfaction with the treatment of the obedient in relation to sinners in the meals of Jesus. He says to his father, “look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him (Luke 15:29-30). There was nothing so critical that led to Jesus’ death than welcoming “outcasts into table fellowship with himself in the name of the kingdom of God, in the name of the Jew’s ultimate hope, and so both prostituted that hope and shattered the closed ranks of the community against their enemy. It is hard to imagine anything more offensive to Jewish sensibilities.”

The gospel of Matthew captures this reality at the Last Supper when Jesus says: “For this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father (Matt 26:28-29). Mitchell relates reconciliation to eschatology as he says that “being reconciled lies at the heart of Jesus’ message about God’s unexpected arrival among us as a ruler. The ‘kingdom’ or ‘reign’ of God is Jesus’ thick, richly layered symbol for how God arrives among us, for how God leads us from bitterness, isolation, division and rebellion into reconciliation with himself and others.” Mitchell goes on to say that the kingdom is not a political reality but rather it is “the gracious act by which God calls human

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151 Ibid., 49

152 Nathan D. Mitchell, “Reconciliation: The Cross of Christ and the Table of Forgiveness,” in Worship, 84 No. 6 (November 1, 2010), 551
persons into communion with himself and with each other. At the heart of the reign of God lies reconciliation and communion.”\textsuperscript{153} We shall return to this theme in the next chapter for our duty here is only to show that the Eucharist is the sacrament of the kingdom, a sacrament of final reconciliation.

Looking at the Eucharist in its eschatological import has great missionary consequences. In sharing the Eucharist we are confronted with the polarity between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ of the reign of God. Since God in Jesus has opened up God’s self to a relationship with creation especially toward sinners, the missionary activity ushered in by God’s opening is also incomplete until a time when God is all in all. “When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will (also) be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). In this regard, the Eucharist is a sacrament of reconciliation, but also a call to the mission of reconciliation here and now with God and with one another.

Geoffrey Wainwright brings forth the aspect of the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ structure of eschatology to the Eucharist by arguing that: Firstly, the Eucharist is a taste of the kingdom… “To say that the Eucharist provides the taste of the kingdom therefore allows us to express both provisionality and yet the genuineness of the kingdom as it flowers the present.”\textsuperscript{154} Again citing Peter Chrysologus, Wainwright states that “Christ gave the Eucharist that we might by it attain unto endless day and the very table of Christ, and there receive in fullness and unto all satiety that of which we have here been given the taste.”\textsuperscript{155} Secondly, “the Eucharist is a sign of the

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 551

\textsuperscript{154} Geoffrey Wainwright, Eucharist and Eschatology, (Akron, Ohio, OSL Publications, 2002), 188

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 188
Kingdom.” With the Eucharist God’s will to bring all things together under Christ when the fullness of time comes is proclaimed. It is a sign of God’s plan to reconcile of all things in Christ as vividly expressed by Paul.

In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transmigrations, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up (sum up, reconcile) all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:7-10).

Wainwright argues that “the Eucharist proclaims that for humans the kingdom of God means righteousness, peace, and joy in openness to the divine presence, and already the Lord is establishing these things by his coming in the Eucharist.” Thirdly, “the Eucharist is an image of the kingdom.” Here comes what we have expressed on several circumstances in this work: that in the earthly the heavenly, in the corporeal the spiritual, the natural the supernatural is prefigured. By means of symbol or image, though not fully, one has contact with the original. Thus, through sacraments we participate in that real world, the kingdom of God. In this case the reconciliation and communion attained at the eucharistic celebration and the ministry of establishing God’s reign in the world through reconciliation, justice and peace render present the kingdom as summation of all things in Christ at the fullness of time. Fourthly, “the Eucharist as mystery of the Kingdom.” The Eucharist is a mystery of God put in place before the foundation of the world to bring all things to salvation in Jesus Christ, through whom everything must return back to God from where it came. Wainwright postulates that:

The Eucharist epitomizes the divine Mystery. To the eyes of faith it is the revelation of God’s design for human salvation in Jesus Christ; for in the Eucharist the Lord receives men and women

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156 Ibid., 189
157 Ibid., 189
158 Ibid., 189
159 Ibid., 190
in fellowship at his table (Luke 2:34). It exemplifies the *clair-obscur* of ‘the time of the Church.’ When the Mystery of God has been completed (Rev. 10:7), sacraments will cease and the Eucharist will give way to vision of God in his incontestable kingdom.\(^{160}\) It is in the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist more than anywhere that we get the glimpse of the reign of God breaking into history but more importantly drawing us to its fullness at the *eschaton*. The Eucharist here is manifested as the meal of reconciliation through which God draws all things to God’s self in Jesus’ self-gift. Therefore it is through the Eucharist that Jesus will reconcile all things back to God, to share in the eschatological banquet. The fullness of reconciliation will only be a reality in that eschatological sharing of a feast of rich foods at God’s table.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

Our reflection in this chapter has tried to tie up loose ends from the first two chapters and at the same time has highlighted very important themes which will carry us through the discussion on reconciliation *per se*. The theme that permeated the entire chapter is that of participation in the life of a triune God. Our journey has made it clear that worship is the condition of possibility of our participation into the life of God. Worship forms us into a subject because we always pray in someone else’s name, as it were, making our journey on someone’s passport. We travel in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: in doing so we become what we really are and more so ambassadors of the name. We participate in the life of the Godhead as we witness to the world that we walk in the grace of Jesus Christ, in the love of God the Father, and in the communion of the Holy Spirit. God in this liturgical conception is far from being only the subject of worship: God calls the believer to act lovingly, mercifully, tenderly, and justly for this is what the passport we are travelling on represents. Taking seriously

\(^{160}\) Ibid., 191
the importance of the liturgical prayer in forming us in the likeness of the subject we worship, then Christian mission in the world should be a witness to the plan of God established before the foundation of the world, to reconcile all things to God in Christ.

Departing from the mystery of the Holy Trinity we have appreciated the mystery of the Church which according to *Lumen Gentium*, “in Christ, is a sacrament – a sign and instrument, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.”\(^{161}\) The Church is designated as the body of Christ for the reason that it is the sacrament of the absent-present Christ its Lord and founder. The Church appears more as the body of Christ in the unity of the eucharistic or liturgical assembly. Looking at the Church as the body of Christ from its local categorization as the eucharistic assembly we have argued that it is a milieu where through worship “our stories, our songs, our ‘breaking of the bread,’ calls us to the wonder and mystery of inner trinitarian life, a life of accepting and bestowing the Spirit of love.”\(^{162}\) The Eucharist being the highest form of prayer of the Church is the proper place for forgiveness and reconciliation because it is also a culmination of our incorporation into the body of Christ, head and its members. Membership of the body of Christ or Christian identity is characterized by the unity of scripture, sacrament, and living-in-grace witnessed in the life of every believer. Moreover the Eucharist cannot be the culmination of our incorporation into Christ without our being forgiven of our many sins and us having to forgive those who trespass against us. True worship of a true God is expressed by love of justice, concern for the poor, forgiveness rendered to sinners, and the responsibility of making God’s reign of merciful love a reality in the world.

\(^{161}\) *Lumen Gentium*, No. 1

\(^{162}\) John H. McKenna, “Eucharist and Memorial,” 520
We have argued that the Eucharistic Prayer has a power of capturing and making real these realities in five different ways. Firstly, we pointed out that through thanksgiving to the Father with/in Christ forms the assembly into a “subject” after the one who is invoked or rather the one they are impersonating in their praise. The source and goal of our praise is God the Father who has given the gift of love gratuitously as a gift to be received graciously through responsive love. Secondly, the eucharistic memorial calls on God to remember God’s actions of love done in the past that the assembly may benefit in the present world as it journeys into its future. More than anything what is remembered is the reconciling suffering, death and resurrection of “Jesus Christ who is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). This memory is not just any kind of memory but it remembers the oppression, victimization, death of Christ and one cannot remember it well without becoming to the world the reason for which Jesus died, reconciliation of all people to God.

Thirdly, we looked at the invocation of the Holy Spirit to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ given for the forgiveness of sins and the transformation of the believers into the body of Christ for/in the world. It is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for bringing all people into communion, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation and peace. Fourthly, we argued that the goal of communion of the faithful, a gathering from all these divided opposites - male and female, Jew and Gentile, sinner and righteous - was to become one body of Christ healed of all divisions. Finally, the Eucharist is a meal of the eschatological *provisio* which does not promise us cheap fulfillment where we may be comfortable with what we see as forms of reconciliation in the world. This means that the work of reconciliation will not be fulfilled in our history once and for all, but that it still remains a hope although already breaking into our history.
through our engagement. It is the Eucharist that must draw all creation back to God, freed from all corruption and sin.

The mission of the Church drawn from the Eucharist must foster a sort of liturgical formation which will bridge the dichotomy between eucharistic liturgy and the liturgy of life. This must include the formation of a eucharistic spirituality or the formation of Christian virtue grounded in the eucharistic sharing. The Eucharist understood well as the broken body and the blood-shed (sacrifice) for the people is meant to bring them to communion with God and with one another. The ritual or symbol of breaking bread and sharing in it in the community of faith should be a response to the fact that Jesus has given himself for them and in turn they are giving themselves for Christ and for one another cordially. The Eucharist as a sacrament of unity, verity, piety and charity must make for a new “contagion” of self-giving and forgiving love, reconciliation, justice and peace, to replace the contagion of rivalry, scapegoating and self-seeking relationships.

This chapter formed a hinge between our discussion of the mystery of sin in the world manifested by the presence of violence and the soteriology based on the kenosis of the triune God, on one hand, reconciliation and the Church’s mission of reconciliation, on the other. The following chapters will draw upon the eucharistic themes of communion with and in Christ, forgiveness of sins and mission as essential components of the theology of reconciliation.
PART III

RECONCILIATION: A CONTAGION OF SELF-GIVING AND FORGIVING LOVE
CHAPTER IV

5.0 RECONCILIATION IN A VIOLENT WORLD

In the preceding chapters we have established the foundations on which to build the experience, practice and theology of reconciliation. Our journey took us through the consideration of the mystery of sin manifested in violence, which is so prevalent in our world. Secondly, we hinted at the drama of salvation initiated by the kenotic triune God as the condition of possibility of reconciliation in the world. We placed at the center of the drama of salvation the transforming and reconciling power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit changes our situation of enmity, heals wounded relationships by re-establishing us in a covenantal relationship with God and neighbor. Thirdly, we argued that in the Eucharist we find a perfect place, a graceful time, and an awe-inspiring ritual celebration of the covenantal relationship between God and humanity based on Jesus’ obedience to God the Father. We concluded that the Eucharist is a sacrament of reconciliation because its partakers participate in the very life of God by recognizing God as their covenantal partner in their thanksgiving celebration. Celebration stirs the partakers of the gift of the Eucharist to respond to God’s gratuitous love by love and not by calculation. It is through this eucharistic experience of being accepted despite their infidelity, being given the gift of love without calculation, and being nurtured by the grace of God that they become reconciled human beings, who in turn are charged with the ministry of reconciliation.

Thomas W. Porter underscores the necessity of the Eucharist by arguing for the importance of the Last Supper table of the Lord in the ministry of reconciliation because at this table “the message is of God’s forgiveness and steadfast love in spite of our failure to love God
and neighbor.”¹ This table announces that “without forgiveness there is no future”² because that is what the Cross and the resurrection of Christ proclaimed at this table stand for. Recognizing the presence of human brokenness and the need for forgiveness, this chapter will highlight that “the cry of reconciliation grows out of an acute sense of the brokenness experienced on such broad scale in the world today. It arises as people try to rebuild their lives in the ruins of ideological projects, the consequences of human malice and greed… it is to create a different kind of future for ourselves and especially for our children.”³ Reconciliation is about the restoration of justice, the renewal of relationships, and the transformation of human society into the presence of the kingdom of God in history.

Therefore this chapter will develop the last three chapters by establishing the framework in which to speak about reconciliation in a more interpersonal, social, political and theological way. Secondly, beginning from what God has done in Christ, we will highlight that reconciliation can only be achieved by the victim who forgoes legitimate claims of retribution because of his/her experience of God’s loving mercy shown in forgiveness: “not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). This will be achieved by our treatment of the New Testament understanding of reconciliation and its practical implication for the public sphere. The third preoccupation of the chapter will be to establish that believers in imitation of Christ are called to fan into flame a positive contagion of love. It is the theme of reconciliation as a contagion of love that will sharpen the conclusions of the preceding chapters that instead of

¹ Thomas W. Porter, “Introduction,” in Conflict and Communion: Reconciliation and Restorative Justice at Christ’s Table, (Nashville, TN, Discipleship Resources, 2006), 10


imitating self-seeking models we are called to imitate a model of self-emptying love: Jesus Christ. The new model of love can never be rivalrous because his desire is essentially the desire to give and not to acquire. This model will enable us to indicate how humanity might embody divine justice, peace and forgiveness for the reconciliation of the world. Our analysis will conclude that the Church’s experience, theology and practice of reconciliation in the public sphere must be rooted in the imitation of the agapic (kenotic) other, God in Jesus Christ. This means that the ministry of the Church for reconciliation will draw its resources first and foremost from the scriptures and Christian tradition instead of from human sciences and cultural ways because Jesus’ Cross reveals their inability to bring true and lasting reconciliation.

5.1 REASONS FOR SPEAKING ABOUT RECONCILIATION

The primary question which confronts us at the beginning of this chapter is the same as the one with which John W. de Gruchy started his reflections on reconciliation in the post-apartheid South Africa. “For how dare we speak of reconciliation in a world in which there is little justice for the victims of oppression, an immodest haste to forget atrocities and forgive perpetrators for their crimes?” As De Gruchy indicates in his preamble, it is evident in our world that the rhetoric of reconciliation has often times been hijacked by oppressors to prevent their prosecution and punishment. When hijacked, the discourse on reconciliation is profoundly immoral because it denies the reality of what people have experienced. It only serves the selfish ends of the perpetrators of crimes and the powerful. The recognition that the discourse of reconciliation has often times been manipulated can easily lures us to yield to the temptation of remaining silent during and after the apparent situation of brokenness. This situation leaves us in

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4 John W. de Gruchy, Reconciliation: Restoring Justice, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2002), 16
a paradox of daring to speak about reconciliation or just keeping silent because of the evident manipulation and propagandas that some discourses of reconciliation have employed. For De Gruchy the only reason for which we must dare to speak about reconciliation is that “we dare not remain silent in a world torn apart by hatred, alienation and violence. We dare not remain silent whether as citizens or as Christians.”

Reiterating De Gruchy, Christians cannot remain silent and keep a closed eye to human brokenness that has led our world into relentless violence and death.

Since we are Christians and have daringly decided to speak about reconciliation we must look for a language that critically retrieves Christian tradition in a way that speaks meaningfully to the situation in our world today. De Gruchy recognizes the importance of language in the discourse of reconciliation as he argues that “theologically it is appropriate to speak about reconciliation as a God-given reality that can be appropriated, and to claim that, in the end, God will reconcile all things to himself. But it can be highly inappropriate and counter-productive when such faith language is uncritically or directly attached to political discourse.”

De Gruchy wrestles with a difficult and dangerous project as he ingeniously tries to pave a path of bringing theology into the public square for the democratic reconstruction and transformation in a context of a country where Christianity has been an accomplice in colonization, development and enforcement of apartheid. The question that De Gruchy wrestles with in his project is: is there a place for categories of Christian salvation theories, thinking and practice that move beyond the realm of the personal and private to the public square? It comes out clearly in De Gruchy’s project that the theory of Christian atonement “shaped by the vicarious suffering of Christ, the

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5 Ibid., 17

6 Ibid., 18
one who takes the place of the other and transforms the wrath of vengeance into mercy of forgiveness,”7 is central to reconciliation. In our view, the theory of exchange of places should be coupled with the notion of vicarious representation which we have already developed by seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the servant of Isaiah 53, as we argued in the third chapter that instead of a sinner led to the altar of sacrifice there steps forth a representative man who shed his blood for our transgressions and poured out his soul to death. In the same vein with Judith Singleton, we ask, given the situation of South Africa, where Christianity soiled by racial and European myth of supremacy was an accomplice in colonization, capitalism, inequality, development and enforcement of apartheid “is it possible and intelligible to allow Christianity to be a collaborator in the processes of national healing and reconciliation?”8 This question can even be extended to include whether Christianity can be trusted in its involvement in interpersonal and social reconciliation.

Judith Singleton, a critic of De Gruchy’s project of bring Christianity to bear in the public square argues that “before South Africa can hope to experience true reconciliation and healing in order to transform society, it must first confront economic inequality and its violent legacy of the past and the present.”9 In this violent legacy we have Christianity as one of its architects. Therefore to make Christianity which was “an irredeemably western instrument, an externally imposed tool for reconciliation in society comprised of many diverse African societies”10 is to

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7 Ibid., 168
9 Ibid., No. 10
10 Ibid., No. 7
render the whole process suspicious. Instead Singleton is of the opinion that it would be meaningful to employ traditional African ways of reconciliation. However in our view, even though Singleton makes an important critique, we argue that De Gruchy wants to go to the source of the wisdom from which Nelson Mandela drew in choosing Archbishop Desmond Tutu to chair the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC). This was a commission chosen to spearhead the process of national healing, building a culture of human rights against racial oppression in order to move toward the establishment of liberal democracy. In this choice, Mandela acknowledged the value of religion but most of all the importance of a man (Tutu) who was not a scientific expert on the processes reconciliation but a man formed by his “experience of being reconciled, being accepted, being held (however precariously) in the grace of God.”  

Moreover, for De Gruchy “reconciliation… is a human and social process that requires theological explanation, and theological concepts seeking human and social embodiment.”  
The theological issues of reconciliation “include covenant and creation, sin and guilt, grace and forgiveness, the reign of God’s justice and human hope, all of which have a political significance.”  
Citing Joseph Liechty and Cecilia Clegg, De Gruchy states that true reconciliation has “to build on interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth, and justice understood in part as religiously-rooted virtues, but also as basic dynamics (even when unnamed and unrecognized) of human interaction, including public life and therefore politics.”  
In other words, “reconciliation is both the theological reminder of politics, the leap that comes


12 John W. de Gruchy, Reconciliation: Restoring Justice, 20

13 Ibid., 20

14 Ibid., 20
when realism confronts total conflict… and the political reminder of theology, a form of action that endows hope with content.”

Kelly Denton-Borhaug summarizes De Gruchy’s treatment of religion in the public square as regards reconciliation by saying that “it is… an action, praxis and movement before it becomes a theory or dogma, a journey from estrangement to communion; an ongoing process to establish a community of love in which the conflict and injustice, though still present, are actively being addressed, and the eschatological goal of cosmic communion in love being definitely achieved.”

De Gruchy in trying to make Christianity have an effect on the public arena speaks of reconciliation as interpersonal, social, political and above all theological. The first is theological, involving reconciliation between God and humanity which is the condition of possibility of communion among human beings in their social coexistence. The second is interpersonal, which involves “relationships between individuals, for example, in restoring a marriage relationship, or the relationship between a victim and perpetrator of crime.” The third is social, which deals with reconciliation between alienated communities, races, ethnic/tribal communities after the outbreak of violence and exclusion of each other. The fourth is political, which refers to processes of national healing and reconciliation especially in a time when it is evidently impossible to think of meeting real justice after a national tragedy like the case of Rwanda, South Africa and Syria. However it is important to recognize that even if these ways of speaking about reconciliation have been categorized they are always intertwined because what affects an individual will eventually affect the community, the nation and even the entire world. We are not

15 Ibid., 20


17 John W. de Gruchy, Reconciliation: Restoring Justice, 26
going to elaborate on these issues now but we shall come back to them as we develop our theme in the next pages.

In the preceding lines we have drawn much attention to the work of De Gruchy to which we will return from time to time because of the miracle that took place in South Africa after the apartheid regime. This is because the TRC continues to inspire many commissions throughout the world in trying to carry out their work of national healing and reconciliation after a period of great human brokenness ending into violence and deaths of millions of people. Although it is not plausible to set the TRC as a model of reconciliation to varied situations, but it is important to acknowledge that the work of TRC prevented worse bloodbaths in South Africa after apartheid. The TRC was formed to be a forum through which perpetrators of crime and victims of dehumanization, torture and murder would receive forgiveness or offer forgiveness, receive amnesty or healing and integration into a new national community. Three important actors in reconciliation come out prominently here: the victims, perpetrators and the community. The question we are posing here which is actually important for this work is: is it possible to establish a strategy, technique or a method which we can follow or borrow a leaf from as we work for reconciliation after the experience of great human brokenness in the world?

The TRC proposed that victims and victimizers should face each other to tell their stories so that victimizers could experience the pain they inflicted on the victims and that victims experience the contrition of the perpetrators. Central to all this was truth-telling as the first and imperative step to reconciliation. This is to say that reconciliation requires an honest narration of the atrocities committed before forgiveness could become a possibility. However Danaher raises an important issue by asking what the word “truth” really means in a context of violence and death. Danaher argues:
In the face of atrocities, however, telling the truth is complicated and difficult. Particularly in South Africa, the truth was not straightforward. The line between perpetrator and victim was often blurred - those who defended apartheid and those who overthrew it both committed atrocities. Moreover, the truth told after a conflict is often colored by our own experience - it is not the truth of a historical event, but a truth that arises from traumatic wounds. This presents to us the difficulty of prioritizing the truth in the process of reconciliation. If establishing the truth was illusive, then reconciliation is even more difficult. What is reconciliation? It is difficult to give a precise definition of the essence of the reality like reconciliation and even more difficult to determine how it occurs. The commonly accepted description is that reconciliation “is a process of letting go of the past in order to live at peace in the future.” The most striking thing is to realize that this process of letting go of a chaotic past and embracing a peaceful future has no strategy. This is so because it is a process of being touched by a power beyond our control. It involves an experience of the unconditional and loving self-surrender of the offended other who daringly embraces the offender despite the pain inflicted on him/her by the same offender.

Danaher is right to argue that “the process of reconciliation, however, is not scientific - there is no set procedure for bringing together persons who have wounded each other. Reconciliation is more like an art one masters with difficulty.” There is no expert who can demonstrate a technique for reconciliation; those who have been effective in mediating reconciliation are but witnesses to something over which they have no power. With the South African experience we come to notice that “contact with this power cannot be bought or sold; it was not a technique that yielded predicable results or something produced at will. It was a gift

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19 Ibid., No. 3
20 Ibid., No. 3
received through surrender.” As we have already pointed out, it was more like a “Gift-of-being given kenotically to the other with no objectifiable remainder.”

It is at this point, when our project this far seems to come to a terrible conclusion that we cannot formulate a strategy for reconciliation, that it makes sense to emphasize what we have been developing throughout the project. This is to say that reconciliation is in the first place a scandal of God’s loving self-surrender to humanity and secondly a scandal of loving self-surrender among human beings as a participation in the life of God. This brings us to the title of this dissertation “Scandal Must Come: Reconciliation as a Divine-Human Kenotic event in a world immersed in a culture of violence and death.” We cannot come to this conclusion unless what Rowan Williams calls the “‘un-selfing’ involved in union with Christ’s death is made real in the public and social world; the displacing of the ego becomes a giving “place” to others, as God has given ‘place’ to all in his Son.” Christ in his death therefore, as our peace, has created the “place” by breaking down the wall of hostility so that sworn enemies may have access to the Father in the Spirit.

Danaher citing Williams argues that “Paul makes clear his ‘helplessness’ in the face of a totally demanding and transforming fact, the death, and life past death, of Jesus the messiah. The Christ-like life can only be received as an act of grace and mercy.” The power beyond our control and yet which implicates us or demands our loving response is the reconciling grace of God. Through grace God changes enmity into a loving relationship, but most of all grace is given

21 Ibid., No. 3
22 Gil Bailie, “The Vine and Branches Discourse:” 126
24 William J. Danaher, “Some Reflections on the Theology of Reconciliation,” No. 8
as a responsibility for the betterment of the human society. Since God is the architect of reconciliation, we like De Gruchy find in Christianity an important collaborator in the processes of reconciliation in the public arena. Moreover the reconciler through whom God was reconciling the world to God’s self becomes the center of our interest more than reconciliation in itself because all social and political reconciliations only mirror the work fulfilled by God in the reconciler. It is for this that we now turn to Christian understanding of reconciliation as set forth in the scriptures because the scriptures proclaim God’s kenosis as the basis of Christian action in the process of reconciliation, justice and peace in the world.

5.2 RECONCILIATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the theme of reconciliation is not so prevalent, but in a few instances it appears, it can be read as directed to communion with and in God. Here reconciliation has its ultimate source and goal in God’s intention to make other than it is currently, changing the situation especially of enmity, changing it for the better. The New Testament uses four different words for reconciliation. Each word is used pertaining to the context and it cannot be interchanged with another. The goal in all these ways is theological although involving interpersonal, social and even political relations. James Earl Massey finds in the New Testament four terms drawn from a Greek understanding of a change effected in human relationships from a situation of enmity, hostility, and conflict to a situation of peace and harmony. Massey categorizes reconciliation into *Diallasso, Sunallasso, Katallasso* and *Apokatallasso*. Richard Baawobr argues that the root to all these words meaning reconciliation is the Greek *allaso* (ἀλλασσω) which means “make otherwise; change, alter, transform…
exchange, give in exchange…”25 *Allasso* is actually derived from ἀλλος which means ‘the other.’ “The words thus carry with them the sense of exchanging places with ‘the other,’ and therefore being in solidarity with rather than against ‘the other.’”26

De Gruchy also finds in the use of the term *allasso* or more importantly ἄλλος a critical step in the process of reconciliation because it connotes the learning to put ourselves in the place of the other. “To see the ‘other’ and the ‘other’s’ claims from a different point of view… For Christians this is a profoundly Christological moment in the process of reconciliation as Paul indicates in 2 Corinthians.”27 Christ vicariously experienced the position of the “other” and never defined the ‘other’ by his/her sin. This is echoed by Paul when he writes “from now on we regard no one according to the flesh… (2 Cor. 5:16).

Reconciliation begins to become a reality when, without surrendering our identity, who we are, but opening up ourselves to the ‘other,’ we enter into the space between, exchanging places with the other in a conversation that takes us beyond ourselves. In doing so we find ourselves in vicarious solidarity with rather than against the ‘other,’ willing to do to the ‘other’ only what we would want them to do to us.”28

Central to Christian doctrine, practice and process of reconciliation is the notion of exchange of places, especially in the vicarious representation of the innocent one for the sinners. Reconciliation denotes a change or an alteration in relationships between partners from bad to better, from conflict and hate to peace and harmony. The word *allasso* in New Testament texts outside Paul, who attributes it to the change in relationship between God and humanity refers

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26 John W. de Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, 51

27 Ibid., 153

28 Ibid., 153
only to the change that occurs between human partners whose relationships have been strained and broken. However the reason for this change is always based on the teaching of Christ or on the belief in God who has acted in that way. Adding all the New Testament texts to the Pauline corpus, reconciliation is a change for the better in the relationships between God and humanity, in the relationships among human beings and with creation. Therefore reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal in character.

5.2.1 Reconciliation in Non-Pauline New Testament Literature

The first Greek term for reconciliation that Massey finds in the New Testament is Diallasso. In explaining this term, Massey draws our attention to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) especially Jesus’ teaching on anger. Jesus shows how anger not only fractures interpersonal relationships, but also blocks vertical human relationship with God. “Note that the speaking of rash, insulting words to others, all selfish speaking out of intense feelings that are full of human wrath, even if these feelings have been provoked by someone’s prior selfish action, is viewed by Jesus as not only a selfish response to the offending person but as a sinful deed in God’s sight as well.”29 This is expressed vividly in (Mt 5:21-22) where Jesus tells his disciples in another antithesis of this section that “you have heard that it was said to your ancestors… but I say to you… You shall not kill… but I say to you whoever is angry… and whoever says to his brother ‘Raqa’… and whoever says you ‘fool’… will not escape the punishment for such practical consequences of anger. “Hostility is an activity of the heart, and those who wish to be accepted in peace by God must be serious about remaining at peace with

The letter of St. James is right on target when it says: “Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts” (James 4:1-2). From the depths of human heart come conflict and the exclusion of other people who are considered to be enemies. Unfortunately, the exclusion of other people has adverse consequences even on the relation with God. A person cannot have a harsh relationship with fellow human beings and at the same time have a smooth relationship with God.

Therefore a good relationship with God cannot thrive in a heart filled with hostility for another person and also when another person whom we have angered has not yet been reconciled with us. It is here that Jesus drives a point home: “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled (Diallagethi) to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24). Unless the aggrieved parties are reconciled to one another, true worship of a true God is not possible. Put in another way, reconciliation of hostile interpersonal relations in a community is required before making our offering to God for acceptance. Massey argues that “the instruction is ‘be reconciled,’ meaning that the one who seeks to please God must take the initiative to remove whatever blocks a right relation with another person.”

Massey sees the first appearance of the notion of reconciliation outside Pauline corpus in the use of the aorist imperative passive of Diallasso (Diallagethi a command, “be reconciled!”). “It is one of the four terms used in the New Testament to teach the need to restore or bring back into

\[\text{30 Ibid., 8-9}\]

\[\text{31 Ibid., 9}\]
agreement or harmony a relation that has been broken or at least at odds.”³² The bottom line is that our interpersonal relationships have great consequences on our relationship with God.

The second use of the term reconciliation is found in the Acts of the Apostles in which Stephen was trying to defend himself before the Sanhedrin by arguing that what he was living and proclaiming was the fulfillment of the promises of God made to Israel. These promises have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ whom the elders condemned and had him crucified. Stephen spoke to the council using a passage of the Old Testament (Exodus 2:11-14) which the council knew so well. He started with the fight between a Hebrew and an Egyptian whom Moses had killed in taking sides with the Hebrew. Then the word of reconciliation comes in the event that took place the following day when Moses tried to stop a quarrel between two Hebrews. “The next day he came to some of them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you do wrong to each other?’” (Act 7:26). The verb used is (Sunallassen), to reconcile. Massey argues that “the imperfect form of the verb, Sunallassen, is used here in the report to indicate that Moses ‘tried to reconcile’ the two recalcitrant brawling Hebrews.”³³ Stephen’s lesson shows that Moses, a leader and judge over Israel who was raised in Pharaoh’s court had a desire that his kinsfolk should understand that God was offering them deliverance and reconciliation. And yet more than Moses, Christ, the divine ruler and judge was in their midst to reconcile them not only to one another but also to God, they had him crucified. Diallasso and Sunallasso with their derivatives (Diallagethi and Sunallassen) capture how reconciliation is spoken about in non-Pauline New Testament literature. Sunallasso and Diallasso denote a change for the better in interpersonal relationships that had been broken.

³² Ibid., 9
³³ Ibid., 9
5.2.2 Reconciliation in Pauline Literature

For Paul reconciliation is first of all the work of God in Christ Jesus and that through Christ in the Spirit, it is a ministry for those who have shared in his reconciling death and resurrection through baptism. The third appearance of the word for reconciliation is found in Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthian Christian community which he had founded on his second missionary journey between 50-52 AD (Acts 18:1-8). The Corinthian community was a diversified community because the city itself was situated on two trading ports. Despite its being a Greek city it welcomed people from Rome, Egypt, Syria and Judea making it a Christian community of diverse cultures. The Corinthian community and indeed other communities which Paul had founded experienced so many problems because of their diversity. The problems ranged from superiority and inferiority complexes between cultures, finding a balance in relationships based on their new found faith in Jesus, whether it was lawful to continue keeping slaves while being followers of Christ, distinctions between citizens and immigrants, and distinctions between the poor and the rich. All these issues created divisions or they were potentially divisive. However the divisions in Corinth widened with the appearance of the “Super Apostles” who came in to preach a different gospel from what Paul had preached. Helen Bond says that “these Super Apostles (as Paul sneeringly refers to them, 2 Cor. 11:22, 12:2) were obviously men of some education and rhetorical ability. They were able to demonstrate their possession of God’s spirit by emphasizing their visions and revelations (2 Cor. 12:1), their mystical experiences (12:2), and their signs, wonders, and mighty works (12:12).”\(^{34}\) The criticism of the Super Apostles for Paul was not baseless because Paul on two very important counts in his argument was no longer a “Moses-follower (2 Cor. 3:1-18), like his critics, but a Christ-follower; Paul

\(^{34}\) Helen Bond, “Paul, the Corinthians, and Reconciliation,” In *Studies in World Christianity*, 9, No. 2, (2003), 193
knew that the promised New Age had already dawned, and that he himself had been called by God to announce that fact and expound upon its results and effects for all who believe.”

Baawobr captures the situation after the appearance of the ‘Super Apostles’ by saying that “people who, till then, had lived peacefully together, probably under the inspiration of one spiritual leader (Paul), began to claim that they belonged to Cephas, or to Apollos or to Paul or to Christ (1 Cor. 1:11-13; 3:1-8; 9:5).” The differences, a source of enrichment, instead became the source of divisions in the Christian community.

The Greek term that Paul uses to capture the processes of reconciliation in answer to different situations of conflict is *katallasso* (reconcile). This term first appears (1 Cor. 7) in processes of restoring broken or threatened spousal relationships. Paul’s teaching appears to be very much in line with Jesus’ teaching about marriage and its indissolubility. Massey is of the same opinion as he argues that:

Paul was not inventing new directions when he counseled: ‘To the married I give this command – not I but the Lord – that the wife should not separate [*me choristhenai*] from her husband, but if she does separate [*choriste*], let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled [*katallageto*] to her husband, and that the husband should not divorce his wife’ (1 Cor. 7:10-11).”

We see here again the term reconciliation is used in the same manner as the other New Testament texts. The term *katallasso* or its derivative in imperative aorist passive form *katallageto* (be reconciled) is a word often used in the “New Testament for reconciliation, and its basic meaning is to change, or exchange; to effect a change.”

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36 Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation and its Relevance for the Church, 182
38 Ibid., 10
Cor. 7:10-11) is that reconciliation as a command from the Lord is initiated by one person, but both parties, wife and husband, benefit from it.

For Paul, the only one who uses the word *katallasso* or its derivative *katallageto* in the New Testament, the word is always connected to the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Joseph Fitzmyer calls these experiences of Jesus, the “Christ-event.” What is at the heart of Paul’s theology is what God has done in Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. God has changed for the better, through the Christ-event, the situation of a broken or threatened relationship. The Christ-event in Paul has ten facets: “salvation, justification, reconciliation, expiation, redemption, freedom, sanctification, transformation, new creation and glorification.”

These ten facets of one work accomplished by the Christ-event are images drawn from Hellenistic, Jewish background and Paul’s own experience of the risen one. Paul’s experience of faith in the Christ-event is that humanity is again at peace with God and with one another. This is to say that the Christ-event is the condition of possibility of reconciliation and the salvation of the entire world. The word *katallasso/katallageto* or the noun *katallage* presupposes a relation that is supposed to or has already undergone a change for the better.

The image in the word shows something having been set aside [kata]: an attitude, a grievance, a position, a deed, a distance, a result, in order to induce or bring about a change for the better. A new disposition is exhibited, a new stance is assumed, a new framework is established granting a rich togetherness where enmity and distance previously were the order. Paul used the noun “reconciliation” [*katallage*] to report something proffered to us by God (Romans 5:8-11) and something experienced by us on the basis of the sacrificial death Jesus Christ underwent on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:17ff).

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40 Ibid., No. 67

Correspondingly, Curtiss Paul DeYoung argues that \((\text{katallasso, katallage, and later apokatallasso})\) “in classical Greek… denoted a change from a state of enmity to one of friendship, the healing of a quarrel… a radical change occurs in which an intimate and personal relationship is renewed. There is a suggestion of a real friendship, first existing, then broken, and finally restored.”\(^{42}\) DeYoung sees that when Paul uses the term reconciliation to speak powerfully about the meaning of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus for humanity, he tries to capture the reality of “(1) being put into friendship with God and each other, (2) radical change and transformation of a relationship, and (3) restoration of harmony.”\(^{43}\) Paul gives novelty to the term reconciliation by giving it a spiritual dimension coming from the experiences of the Christ-event.

5.2.2a Reconciliation as New Creation

Let us consider briefly Paul’s exhortation in the second letter to the Corinthians. Paul urges the Corinthians to become new creatures through their knowledge of Christ’s love. Paul shows (2 Cor. 5:11-21) that reconciliation can only be achieved in and through Christ who died for us but rose again to life. Jan Lambrecht divides this passage into two sections: in (5:11-13) Paul, an apostle, affirms that he is already known as such by God and that he hopes to be known so now in the consciences of the Corinthians to whom he had preached; in (5:14-21) Paul tries to show that “his apostleship is situated in the whole salvific plan.”\(^{44}\) The section (14-21) is further divided in to two sections (14-17) and (18-21). In (14-15) there is a profound reference to

\(^{42}\) Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge – Our only Hope, (Valley Forge, PA, Judson Press, 1997), 44

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 45

\(^{44}\) Jan Lambrecht, Second Corinthians, Sacra Pagna Series Vol. 8, Daniel Harrington, ed., (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1999), 91-103
soteriology based on the death and resurrection of Christ as it reads: “for the love of Christ holds us in its grip, since we have reached the conclusion that one man has died for all” (2 Cor. 5:14). The immediate implication of the grip of Christ’s love in the sentence is that no one should ever die since one has died for all. Surprisingly, this is not the conclusion Paul gives to the premise. Instead he says “therefore all have died.” He is convinced that in the death of this one man all human beings have died. The death of this one man is so contagious just as the sin of another one man was so contagious.

W. Hulitt Gloer makes an important analysis of Paul’s argument as he writes:

In what sense is the death of Christ the death for all? If this death is to be understood merely in terms of substitution, then the logical inference of Paul’s affirmation that “one has died for all” would be “therefore, no more have to die.” Paul’s conclusion, however, is that because one has died, all have died. Thus the reality to which he points goes beyond mere substitution. It may be better understood on the basis of his understanding of Jesus as the representative man… Just as the action of Adam had consequences of universal significance as all humanity came to participate in it, so the action of the last Adam has consequences of universal significance as humanity comes to participate in it.\(^{45}\)

The implication of this presentation is that all those who have died with Christ in Baptism will live with Christ in resurrection. Paul declares that it is the love of God for him which was manifested in the death of Christ on the Cross which compels him to a new way of living. Through the Christ-event Paul has become “new creation,” no longer living for himself. Therefore, we must live for the one who died for us and rose. The life of a Christian must be ignited by the love of Christ. Then it makes much sense that “he died for all in order that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them” (5:15). New creation is rooted in the “un-selfing,”\(^{46}\) self-decentering, Christ-centering and


neighbor-centering as way of living. The theme of Christ-centering is prevalent in the letter to the Galatians: “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). We have to become a new creation; the past has died with the death of Christ and the new has been born in the resurrection of Christ and the Pentecost. Reconciliation achieved by the death of Christ makes the believers “new creation” having left behind the old self. The “new creation” is only possible through the Holy Spirit who continues to transform humanity into the image of the Son of God, who for love gave himself up for us.

The letters (2 Cor. 5:11-21 and Eph. 2:14-18) describe the Spirit as new life itself. Danaher is right to argue that “the greatest work of the Spirit is to give us the power to live cruciform lives patterned after Christ's work of reconciliation. This is why the theme of imitation recurs throughout the Pauline writings.”

Inasmuch as one participates in Christ’s death, one also participates in the new creation, the new way of living, new way of knowing, and reconciliation is the fruit of the Spirit coming from the Christ-event. So Paul sees himself, and all who have experienced God’s reconciling love, as charged with the responsibility of bringing others into the reconciled family of God. At the heart of it all is the imitation of the self-giving surrender of God in Christ which makes human ambassadorial duties for reconciliation an imperative.

The climax of this passage (2 Cor. 5:18-20) shows that reconciliation is the work of God achieved in the death of Christ. In this way Christ is the first ambassador of God’s reconciling work and that those who have died with Christ in a death like his through the Spirit in baptism

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47 William J. Danaher, “Some Reflections on the Theology of Reconciliation,” No. 8
are second ambassadors of reconciliation in the world. This is the reason for the Church’s (a community of sharers in the death of Christ) involvement in interpersonal, social, and even political reconciliation. The passage reads:

And all this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of Christ, as God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

Paul’s response to the ‘Super Apostles’ who came with recommendation letters supposedly from Jerusalem is that he needed no recommendation letters because the new life of the Christian community at Corinth as a response to Christ-event must be his recommendation letter. Baawobr does an interesting work in bringing to the fore the chiastic presentation of what Paul does in (18-20) to show that God is the author of reconciliation and, Christ, through whom it is done.

“A v. 18a: the source of reconciliation (katallaxantos) – God;

B v. 18b: through Christ (first agent of reconciliation);

C v. 18c: reconciliation (katallagēs) ministry given to Paul and others;

D v. 19a: God in Christ is (still) reconciling (katallassôn) trespasses;

C’ v. 19b: message of reconciliation (Katallagēs) is entrusted to Paul and others;

B’ v. 20a: Ambassadors for Christ – Paul and his co-workers (second agents of reconciliation)

A’ v. 20b: the terminus of being reconciled (katallagēte) with God.”

In the chiastic structure Baawobr shows that God represented by (A; A’) (katallaxantos and katallassôn) initiates the process of reconciliation and is its end. Therefore God is the source and the goal of reconciliation. God does this through Christ Jesus (B; B’) and by extension through those that have shared in the death of Christ, like Paul and his companions. Then (C; C’)

48 Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation...” 184
is all those who because of Christ have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Let us cite Baawobr at length here to show that God in Christ was restoring, renewing, and reconciling the world to God’s self.

The gratuitous nature of the reconciliation stands out right in the center of the chiastic structure (D). Even from the verbal point of view, the difference in the form of the verb that is used catches the attention of the reader. When God is the subject of reconciliation, the verb *katallassô* is in the active voice (A [*katallaxantos*] and D [*katallassôn*]). When reconciliation is facilitated by others (the rest of the occurrences), the verb *katallassô* is in the passive voice. This underlines all the more strongly that God is the main actor in the reconciliation process and that the human agents facilitate this process either by being instruments of the reconciliation or participating in it as the beneficiaries who are being reconciled to God.⁴⁹

It is here that Paul manifests a difference in the use of the term reconciliation. The first two instances of the word reconciliation we looked at (*Diallasso* and *Sunallasso*) presuppose that sound human relationships open us up to sound relationship with God. While in Paul the order is that firstly God changes our relationship of enmity gratuitously in the Christ-event and secondly the recipients of this grace have to respond to it graciously by living no longer for themselves. Therefore for Paul and his companions (second agents), their mission is a response and handing on the reality of reconciliation achieved in Christ (first agent) who shared in the human condition so that humans may share in God’s righteousness manifested in Jesus. The second agents of reconciliation are identified with Christ’s faithful covenantal relation to the Father.

Christoph Schwöbel argues that human reconciliation to God is based on a twofold identification. “The sinless Christ is identified with human sinfulness so that sinful humans may be identified with God’s righteousness. The reality created by this twofold Christological identification is transmitted by God through Paul’s ministry. It is addressed to humanity as a request, as a plea: ‘Let yourselves be reconciled to God’”⁵⁰ Jesus reconciles people to God more

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⁴⁹ Ibid., 184

than anything because of his experience of living with human beings in their brokenness or sinfulness by turning this situation into an opportunity of grace. Reconciliation is the passing away of old things and the coming in of new things, a change in the way Christians treat each other. “The de-centering from self and re-centering on Jesus and other is the fruit of reconciliation”⁵¹ achieved in the Christ-event. Paul and his co-workers have been given the mission of reconciliation on behalf of Christ and they will achieve this by the proclamation of the gospel. It is important to acknowledge the importance of the proclamation of the word of God for any process of reconciliation. The message in this proclamation is simply [καταλλαγὴ] “be reconciled to God” (5:20) and to one another because of Christ’s death for you and his resurrection and Pentecost for the life of the world. This presupposes a beginning of a new contagion of love which is living in full consciousness for the one “who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

5.2.2b Justified by Faith

Apart from the Corinthian correspondence, Paul also speaks of reconciliation in the letter to the Romans. Paul’s style of writing in many of his letters was a response to pastoral questions in the communities he had founded which looked to him as a spiritual father. He wrote to correct malpractices in Galatia and Corinth, to explain some pastoral issues concerning those who had died in Thessalonica and to offer an exhortation to partnership in Christ to the Philippians. On the other hand, in the letter to the Romans, Paul, who is not the founder of the community, purposely makes a theological reflection on what he has been teaching in his ministry to non-Jews. In (Rom 3:21-5:21) Paul speaks about justification through faith in Christ Jesus and not through following to the letter the Law of Moses.

⁵¹ Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation...” 185
Faith in Jesus, and not observance of the Law of Moses, Paul insists, has made believers just, thus establishing peace between them and God (Rom 5:1-2). As a result, God generously pours out his Holy Spirit into the hearts of his children (Rom 5:5). The state of God’s children before this moment was that of helpless sinners and enemies (Rom 5:6, 8, 10). Relations had deteriorated between God and us and somebody had to intervene to repair this state of affairs, which is what Jesus did.\footnote{Ibid., 188}

Paul’s argument is intensified by the phrase “how much more,” meaning from something small to something large. Keeping a similar argument as the one in (2 Cor. 5) Paul argues that while we were still enemies God reconciled (\textit{katallagēmen}) us to God’s self by the death of his Christ, \textit{how much more}, now that we have been reconciled, shall we receive life through his resurrection (Rom. 5:10). The death of Christ reconciled us to God and the resurrection will more than his death save us from estrangement from God.

Baawobr, citing Friedrich Büchsel, postulates that “the essential features of man’s state prior to reconciliation are entanglement in a self-seeking which cannot fulfill the divine covenant of love (Rom 8:7) and his consequent standing under the divine displeasure (Rom 8:8), wrath and judgment.”\footnote{Ibid., 189} The underlying principle in all this is that reconciliation is the expression of the unconditional love of God. Reconciliation is not a reciprocal act between God and human beings or put in another way there is no mutuality in steps taken to reconciliation. It is freely given to human beings by God the Father, through the Son and it continues to take place through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this understanding reconciliation is highly theological as it is the work of God toward humanity. Consequently justification through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us leads to reconciliation and peace not because of human merit but because of God’s unconditional love. Although both justification and reconciliation can be understood as an explanation of freedom from sin achieved in the Christ-event, one sees that reconciliation
expresses a more personal reality of harmonious relationships calling for reciprocal love and justification expresses God’s merciful justice which can only be received through faith.

Before we move to disputed letters of Paul it is important to raise a highly debated issue among theologians: the reconciliation of the world in (Rom 11:13-15). Some theologians have found in it the anti-Semitism which they believe runs throughout the entire New Testament and the wrong Christian stance to blame the death of Jesus on Jews. Paul writes: “Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry in order to make my own people jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world (katallagē kosmou), what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!” (Rom 11:13-15). In (Rom 5:8-9 and 2 Cor. 5:19), Paul says that God has reconciled humanity to God’s self despite human sin. God proved his love for humanity by surrendering God’s Son to death while humanity was still dwelling in sin and transgression, then “how much more” now that they have been justified through faith in Christ. Unfortunately the Jews, Paul’s own people, have rejected the message of reconciliation achieved by the Christ-event. He turns to the Gentiles only to make the Jews jealous through the coming to faith of the Gentiles. The rejection of the Jews has actually enriched the world since through it the Gentiles have access to salvation, but salvation will much more be comprehensive when the Jews also accept the message. Therefore the acceptance or the faith of the Jews will be but life from the dead (Rom 11:15).

Hamerton-Kelly drawing from the mimetic theory of René Girard finds in (Rom 11:15) an irony of the fulfillment of God’s plan for the whole world. The Jews were servants of sacred violence and their rejection of Christ served the plan of the salvation of the entire world. In saying ‘no’ to Christ, the Jews actually said ‘yes’ to the plan of God for the salvation of the
world. “If their transgression (παράπτωμα – Rom 11:15) is wealth to the world, and their loss gain to the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! (Rom 11:12). Their transgression is wealth, their loss is gain, and the ultimate fulfillment of their election – namely, the eschatological acceptance of Christ – will be “life from the dead”’ (Rom 11:15). It is here that we see the great irony in the trinitarian plan of salvation manifested in God’s complete self-emptying and self-surrendering love. In view of this plan God can give up the Son to the fate of the Cross and the Jews to the fate of disobedience for the sole purpose of the reconciliation of the whole world to God’s self.

In conclusion, all this happens according to the plan of God, which is a “plan to effect mercy for all the world and that even in their refusal the Jews are God’s beloved and God’s elect servants in carrying out this plan.” The point of the text hangs on justification through faith in Christ which presupposes divine justice, but justice which is dispensed by the loving mercy of God in service of human salvation. In our STL thesis we argued that “reconciliation is a manifestation of two attributes of God: righteousness and love. The formal righteousness of God is first and foremost centered on his justice, to make right that which has gone wrong.” Using the paradigm of Adam and Eve in (Rom 5:12) we showed that reconciliation is the work of God’s merciful love. Adam and Eve grasped at the life that was not given them in the image of plucking the forbidden fruit. The act of disobedience has affected the vertical relation with God. They want to take the place of God and become as God is. By disobeying God they have been entrapped by two great powers: sin and death. For justice to be served they have to make

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54 Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, 130
55 Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, 130
56 Mabvuto Phiri, “Receive Your Own Mystery and Become What You Receive:” 29
reparation for having disobeyed God, but they cannot because they do not have the resources as they have fallen completely into the power of sins and death. The only thing that can make right what has gone wrong is the wronged party, God. In this regard, “God’s righteousness is actually justice inasmuch as the wronged is the first to make right what was wrong. Justice is not that the offender should be reproached to accept the wrong and confess, but that the wrongdoer is freed because the wronged frees them. God’s righteousness cannot be conceived without his love.”

Therefore reconciliation is God’s extravagant journey of love to renew and sustain the once broken relationship with humanity to the point of surrendering the Son, the Jews, God’s own elect, so that the entire world may benefit. To limit the New Testament to anti-Semitism and the desire to blame the Jews instead of the Romans for the death of Jesus is to leave the whole argument of the Christ-event in the middle before its conclusion. Paul writes that: “He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?” (Rom 8:32). Even more revealing is the phrase: “For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all” (Rom 11:32). The conclusion lies in the unconditional, self-emptying, self-surrendering and reconciling love of God for which God did not even spare the Son and the Jews for the benefit of the world.

5.2.2c The Death of Hostility

The fourth term that Massey draws from the New Testament is (Apokatallassō) and it is only found in the disputed letters of Paul (Eph. 2:16 and Col. 1:20, 22). “The meaning is the same as other derivatives of allasso in Pauline letters, namely to change, to transform and when

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57 Ibid., 30
applied to reconciliation, to re-establish personal relations.”

Baawobr states that what is new with Apokatallassō is that Christ is at the center stage while God the Father remains in the background, even if God the Father is the one to whom human beings are reconciled. As we have already argued above that Paul is not a Moses-follower but a Christ-follower, his ministry of reconciliation springs from the death and resurrection of Christ and not from the law. In (Eph. 2:16), the consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus was the removal of divisions that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. This is so because God’s plan of mercy from the beginning is to embrace both the Jews and Gentiles. The divisions which were so prevalent between the Jews and the Gentiles range from “religious differences, legal differences, cultural differences, racial and social differences.”

Jesus’ death and resurrection crossed out all the divisions and made the two groups into one. Christ “abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of two, thus making peace, and might reconcile [apokatallaze, aorist subjunctive] both groups to God in one body through the Cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it” (Eph. 2:15-16).

Reconciliation in this letter advances a more social-cultural and even political dimension. For those in the Church no ethnic, tribal, cultural, racial, legal and socio-political group is superior to the other because of their unity in Christ. “Reconciliation in this Deutero-Pauline line of thought, is inter-culturally and internationally contagious when it is true and in Christ. Different cultures and nations previously at loggerheads reconcile with each other in Christ’s death on the Cross.”

The wall of hostility has been broken down by the death of one man in whom all have died (2

58 Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation...” 193


60 Ibid., 13

61 Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation...” 198
Cor. 5: 14). The fruit of the Christ-event was not only reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles, but much more the reconciliation to God of one group created out of these two groups.

The theme of the reconciliation of the Jews and Gentiles through the loving mercy of God manifested in the Christ-event, especially the Cross, builds on the letter to the Colossians where Christ is deemed the Lord of all creation. The mission of Christ was to reconcile all things to God. The reconciliation took place when Christ made peace through “the blood of his Cross” (Col. 1:20b). In Colossians the deed which Christ wrought through the blood of his Cross has a reconciliatory efficacy on visible and invisible things, on things on earth and things in heaven because he is Lord of all. Margaret Y. MacDonald argues that through the phrase “making peace by the blood of his Cross” (Col. 1:20), the author of the letter to the Colossians explains how Christ’s reconciling work has a universal efficacy. “It is the only place in the New Testament where the verb “to make peace” (eirēnopoieō) is found… This phrase is striking in a hymn devoted to celebrating Christ’s triumph and cosmic reign. It reminds believers that Christ’s suffering and death is central to the salvation of the universe.”

In mentioning “the blood of his Cross” the author makes explicit what was implied in Paul’s undisputed letters (2 Cor. 5 and Rom 5) in which the components of Christ’s suffering and death were necessary for reconciliation although not making any mention of the role of the Cross.

Hamerton-Kelly views the Cross in Paul as a synonym or metonymy of the gospel. “As given by God, the gospel is the benefits of the work of Christ, and the Cross is a summary symbol of those benefits. The phrase “Cross of Christ” (σταυρὸς χριστοῦ) describes the power of the gospel that can be drained away if it is proclaimed as human wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:17) and

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63 Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence: Paul’s Hermeneutic of the Cross, 65
power. The Cross of Christ is very important because through it even all the cosmic powers and principalities have been brought under the reign of God. As a result of the Cross, there exists no hostility or dichotomy between God and creation as thought by the Gnostic and Hellenistic opponents to which the author of the letter to the Colossians responds. In the letter the Cross of Christ is a central component of the Christ-event because it is the symbol of the loving mercy and self-surrender of God to humanity and to the entire creation. Creation through the Cross becomes and remains the divine milieu. The Cross is the revelation of the kenotic love of the Trinity. It is therefore the source of real knowledge and the power of God which lies in kenotic love.

Loren T. Stuckenbruck sees that the Christ-event has great consequences for the Christian community at Colossae as it has for our own contemporary Church communities. She writes:

The Christ event not only has brought forgiveness of sins and reconciliation (Col. 1:13, 20, 21; 2:13), but is the very framework within which the readers are to structure their lives. Through baptism they have been initiated into the triumph of Jesus’ death over the legal demands and inimical powers (2:14–15) and they have already been ‘raised with Christ’ (2:13; 3:1), whereby they may ‘put on’ a new form of life in which ethnic, social, and religious distinctions no longer count in the same way as before (3:9–11, 12–14).  

All these elements have been achieved by the Cross of Christ which is in itself a proclamation of the end of enmity between God and creation and among the beneficiaries of the mystery of reconciliation. Moreover the mystery of reconciliation is not our achievement but a gift of grace and the mercy of God. To us, it is a commitment that is undertaken while realizing the vulnerability we are putting ourselves into by this task, and that it is only through our commitment to this gift that we become healers of the brokenness of our world.

5.3 RECONCILIATION AS A CONTAGION OF KENOTIC LOVE

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In this section of the chapter we want to articulate the practical implications of the biblical understanding of reconciliation in relation to central themes we raised in the preceding chapters, especially in reference to how Christ lived and died. This will clarify the basis for the existence and mission of the Church in interpersonal, social and political reconciliation. Having argued that reconciliation is never a systematic and scientific activity to which we can apply strategies, techniques, and principles for its achievement, what follows will contend that it can be cultivated as a virtue coming from our spiritual commitment to Christ in the community of faith. This will involve talking about the honest required to face our limited human condition, as well as the need for merciful justice, forgiveness and peace.

5.3.1 Coming Face to Face with our Poverty

Johann Baptist Metz in a small book, *Poverty of Spirit*, argues that the contingent human condition is dazzlingly revealed in Christ especially in his incarnation and crucifixion. Metz sees human existence tossed from all sides by pain, suffering, injustice, violence and death. This experience threatens our humanity to its core, as a result, escapism is the most immediate human response. One can respond either by pretending not to carry the threat of the contingent human condition in our consciousness or by trying to rise above it. Unfortunately whichever way we take we find ourselves sandwiched between the desirable and the inevitable. Metz finds in the temptations of Jesus (Mt 4:1-11) a revealing paradigm for human stance in front of the contingent condition. In place of the inhuman strength, security and spiritual abundance offered by Satan in the temptations, Jesus chose obedience to God which presupposed weakness, vulnerability and spiritual hunger. For Metz our humanity is always a potentiality toward fulfillment. Christ in his incarnation and passion has made our humanity a ‘type’ of his own humanity in that “Christ the sinless one, experienced the poverty of human existence more
deeply and more excruciatingly than any other person could… In the poverty of his passion, he had no consolation, no companion angels, no guiding star, no Abba in heaven.”65 By accepting and embracing our humanity to its bitter end in the passion, Jesus brought into the presence of God the poverty of human spirit. The passion, and more importantly the Cross reveal the truth of what it really means to be human: an imitation of Christ’s attitude in whose “poverty of spirit we learn to accept ourselves as beings who do not belong to ourselves”66 but to God and all others in the world. Realizing and embracing this reality means accepting the vulnerability, the weakness, and the poverty that come with the honest encounter with our true human condition. The fullness of our humanity lies in shedding our egocentrism and embracing others just as God has embraced us in Christ’s self-donation. This is what Metz calls mysticism or the imitation of Christ.

Metz, like Paul, understands that what lies at the heart of the mystery of human existence is the poverty of Christ. “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (1 Cor. 8:9). Again he “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil. 2:6). It is only through such an attitude that humanity will come to discover the truth of what it really means to be human and reach its full potential. Highlighting the path we have already charted, Metz argues that worship and prayer are essential for the formation of a human being in the light of Christ’s poverty of spirit. Metz states that “only prayer reveals the precipitous depths of our poverty. Submission to it involves an awareness of someone else. We are so poor that even our poverty is not our own; it belongs to the mystery of God. In


66 Ibid., 31
prayer we drink the dregs of our poverty, professing the richness and grandeur of someone else: God."\textsuperscript{67} The truth of our human poverty, an experience of the weakness of God which bestows strength, can be lived concretely through the sacraments, prayer and love of neighbor. In Christ’s poverty we encounter the God of love and we are situated in the world where God drew near to us, even when we were still sinners, as our fellow human being. God did this so that we may draw near to other human beings, even if they be our enemies.

Metz expresses clearly that the reality of Christ’s poverty is a mystery of God’s love meant for the world. Through this mystery we have been purchased for love of neighbor.

The only image of God is the face of our brother, who is also the brother of God’s Son, of God’s own likeness (2 Cor. 4, 4; Col. 1, 15). Our human brother now becomes a “sacrament” of God’s hidden presence among us, a mediator between God and man. Every authentic religious act is directed toward the concreteness of God in our human brother and his world. There it finds its living fulfillment and its transcendent point of contact. Could man be taken more seriously than that? Is anything more anthropocentric than God’s creative love?\textsuperscript{68}

In this trend of thought the true image of God is found in the freedom to love to the end even though this means to be confronted by our contingent condition. Through such self-depleting existence of God in Christ, humanity is invited to imitate or allow itself to be transformed by the divine way of loving. Christ in his death on the Cross has become for us the exemplar and mediator of God’s self-giving, self-emptying and forgiving love. Freedom to love opens us to see others just as they truly are without making them become us. Thus, through the incarnation and the paschal mystery we have been approached by God just as we are: trespassers.

Every genuine human encounter must be inspired by poverty of spirit. We must forget ourselves in order to let the other person approach us. We must be able to open up to him, to let his distinctive personality unfold - even though it often frightens or repels us. We often keep the other person down, and only see what we want to see; thus we never really encounter the

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 51

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 32
mysterious secret of his being, only ourselves. Failing to risk the poverty of encounter, we indulge in a new form of self-assertion and pay a price for it: loneliness. Because we did not risk the poverty of openness (cf. Mt. 10, 39), our lives are not graced with the warm fullness of human existence. We are left with only a shadow of our real self.\textsuperscript{69}

Departing from the journey God has taken to encounter us in the incarnation and especially in the passion of Jesus we would conclude that the best possible world is not the one in which there is no violence and hate. The best world should be one in which people live by encountering each other without concealing the poverty of the human condition. This encounter includes all those people we love to hate because of what they have been to us and most of all what they have done to us. The consequence of the failure to see others as they really are is that we end up grasping at their place in a situation where it appears that only the other matters and we do not. This being the case, therefore we think that we can only matter or exist by being them. Thus, reconciliation is an acceptance of the risk of the poverty of encountering the offending other as he/she really is in order to love him/her freely without reducing him/her to be a servant of our acquisitive and rivalrous desire which seeks to fulfill itself in the other through revenge. The openness to such an encounter requires a reformation of our desires from retribution, punishment and reprisal into the honesty of agape.

5.3.2 Reformation of Desire

In the first chapter we made reference to the triangle of desire and concluded that desire is always designated by the other. This means that human desire is always copied from others although ordinarily we try to conceal the reality that we are imitators. In order to reach the object of desire the subject must pass through or imitate the model who occupies the apex of the triangle. Unfortunately, since the model also desires the same object acquisitively, the desire is

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 43-44
deformed into conflictual mimesis, which leads to violence and death. In imitating the alienated model/obstacle, human desire is deformed into a self-seeking and violent contagion. The Model/Obstacle triangle can be represented as follows:

In the diagram, line A represents the movement of the subject toward the object of desire but this journey always passes through the model/obstacle, who has made the object desirable. There is no direct line from the subject to the object because the subject does not desire the object without the designation of the model. On the other hand, the model’s desire is always confirmed by the desire of the subject: the model says I chose a good thing and that is why the other desires it. As line B shows, there is also no direct line from model to object because the model’s desire is only confirmed by the presence of the subject who desires what he/she desires. Since the model and the subject designate to each other the object of desire then line A, starting from the subject, must pass through or the subject is mediated by the model to reach the object and in the same way line B, starting from the model, must be mediated by the subject to reach the object of desire.
Reconciliation introduces into the apex of the triangle a model of unconditional love. Once the apex of the triangle is taken by a non-acquisitive model, self-emptying love replaces self-seeking love making a contagion of selfless love the order of human existence. The truth of the matter is that love is as contagious as violence. Hamerton-Kelly recasts this mimetic reality of acquisitive and non-acquisitive love into what he calls eros and agape. Following A. Nygren’s classic study *Agape and Eros*, he argues that agape is, “according to Paul and John, the divine love that creates and bestows value on the beloved, while eros is the Pagan desire that seeks its own fulfillment first.”\(^{70}\) Eros is an immature love because at the end of the day it is a self-seeking love:

> It achieves this mimetically by idolizing the beloved, turning the beloved in the perfect model/obstacle by assimilating the model/obstacle point of the triangle to the object point. This in effect transforms the beloved into the Sacred, with reference to which the self can love only its own love, desire its own desire, because as total obstacle the other no longer mediates but merely reflects the self, while as perfect model it binds the self to itself absolutely.\(^{71}\)

In this case one begins “to love that which one fears, to be attracted by the terrible, fascinated by the awful, obeying the fatal dictates of the wish for death.”\(^{72}\) It is for this that in most cases victims end up being the worst of persecutors because they make their victimizers into idols whom they love and hate at the same time. Miroslav Volf puts it beautifully: “greater persecutors are often recruited among the martyrs not quite beheaded.”\(^{73}\) This is the heart of anthropological self-destruction and more so the maintenance of a situation of alienation among human beings.

\(^{70}\) Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 162

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 164

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 164-165

The transformation of the desire from vengeful justice to merciful justice lies at the heart of Christian practice in the work of reconciliation we are proposing.

Spiritually, Hamerton-Kelly sees eros or desire mediated by the model/obstacle affecting human relation to God in the following way:

Thus eros refuses the other’s service and cherishes its own lack. Its denial of the body of the other is a denial of its own creaturehood and dependency, a form of the desire to be God. It will not have its lack filled by another. In freeing from carnal concupiscence, it commits the concupiscence of the spirit that is rivalry with God. The soul lives by a perpetual renunciation of the finite because the finite fails to give it what it wants, and it cannot rest until it passes beyond desire, never to return … and is lost in the all.\(^{74}\)

Metz’s poverty of spirit brings out this reality clearly as he posits that the ability to face our lack with honest is the beginning of our redemption and of those we encounter in the world. Putting this idea in another way, we can say that when human desire is mediated by a fraudulent other who conceals his/her lack, the final result is violence and death, but when mediated by an unconditional loving other it produces self-giving love and life. It is important here to realize that human imitation or rather participation in the unconditional loving other is first of all a gift freely given. The third chapter brought this out as we argued for participation in God’s life through the Eucharist which can rightly be understood as an act of grace. Theologically, what happens here is that we become partakers of the divine nature. It means that what we participate in is God’s own self-communication understood as grace made manifest in the incarnation and more dazzingly in the paschal mystery in its entirety. The one we imitate is also the one who aids us in the imitation, we cannot go it alone.

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\(^{74}\) Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 164
In this regard, Hamerton-Kelly proposes agape as a good form of mimesis because it is a fruit of imitating a non-acquisitive model. This new model, although rich, became poor for the sake of others. This new model occupies the apex of the triangle, so that to get to the object one has to pass through him. “In agape the other is not the model/obstacle that is both cherished and overcome so that the mediated self can be possessed immediately, but the neighbor who is no obstacle and whose mediatory service is accepted with gratitude and willingly returned. Thus one loves the neighbor as oneself because one loves oneself in the neighbor. Agape is the transformation of the other from model/obstacle into benign mediator.”

Agape transforms the eros/desire triangle from subject – model/obstacle – object (lover - model/obstacle – beloved) into lover – creator/ God/Christ – beloved. Paul rightly shows that imitating a wrong model leads to death while imitating the Christ is grace and leads to life. “But the gift is not like the transgression. For if by that one person’s transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many. And the gift is not like the result of the one person’s sinning. For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation; but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal” (Rom 5:15-16).

Therefore it is grace through the imitation of Christ that destroys the death brought about by the imitation of the sinful other. The reformation of desire into agapic love, which is not self-seeking or a love of one’s own love, can be represented diagrammatically as shown hereunder:

75 Robert Hamerton-Kelly, Sacred Violence, 165
The subject no longer imitates competitively because the model is not grasping but loving. Echoing Paul, the subject is molded through grace into the likeness of Christ who loves unconditionally. “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Like Metz’s poverty of spirit, one puts the other first with the confidence that in such a surrender one will receive from the other one’s true self. Therefore an individual becomes a new creation when the reconstituting other is the unconditional loving other. Moreover reconciliation from the biblical witness can rightly be conceived as a movement from self-abasement (Phil. 2:5-11); to a gratuitous re-creation of the sinner into new creation by the one who forgave even when the sinner was still trespassing (2 Cor. 5:14-21); and to living in trusting imitation of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself up for us (Gal. 2:20). Paul argues that human restoration lies in “the reorientation wrought by the mimetic identification with Christ’s affirmation of me by my affirmation of Christ. He lives in me and I live in him: a perfect expression of the mimetic constitution of the self in creaturely contingency.”

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Ibid., 169
at its best because from now on a person lives in Christ and as Christ in the world, forgiving and reconciling enemies.

5.3.3 Mysticism and Reconciliation

We argued in the second chapter that the greatest human spiritual predicament is the idolization of God which is essentially the imitation of God in an acquisitive and self-seeking manner. At the root of the imitation we are proposing is the biblical practice of life which posits that the standard of Christian ethics is the character and activity of God in Christ. In the imitation of Christ we come to realize that what is truly ours is what we have given away for the benefit of the other and not what we have appropriated through grasping. The measure of Christian conduct is always God’s holiness, generosity, mercy, justice, compassion, and self-emptying love. In the Old Testament, God is always the standard that must be imitated. We read a command given to Moses and Aaron for the Israelites: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44). This command should be coupled with Jesus’ call: “be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (5:48). Jesus gives this command to his disciples at the pinnacle of his teaching on forgiveness of enemies. Imitation of God without self-surrender to the other understood as forgiveness of enemies and love of neighbor especially the poor is idolatry. Therefore the best expression of Christian imitation of God is the love of enemies. In view of reconciliation we propose the imitation of Christ to take the route of merciful or healing justice, forgiveness, and peace.

5.3.4 Jesus the Peace and Justice of God

In our survey on the writings of Paul especially in his letter to the Roman we found the theme of justice or justification coming out prominently. Paul understands justice not in terms of
retribution but more in terms of God’s act of mercy, which heals and renews the relationship that had gone wrong. More importantly, we discovered that it is the offended party that takes the initiative to heal, restore and renew the relationship that was broken or at odds. Christopher Marshall argues that the words “punishment,” “retribution,” “vengeance,” “retaliation,” and “reprisal” as conceived in modern English language have no place in Christian vocabulary let alone in daily practice of life. Marshall writes:

My premise is that the first Christians experienced in Christ and lived out in their faith communities an understanding of justice as a power that heals, restores, and reconciles rather than hurts, punishes, and kills, and that this reality ought to shape and direct a Christian contribution to criminal justice debate today.  

The imitation of Jesus, the justice of God, we are proposing in this section has important implications for Christian involvement in reconciliation. The most important implication is that justice sought by Christians will be the justice that heals, restores, and reconciles both the victim and victimizer in the community. Moreover the right understanding of biblical justice has its goal in restoration, transformation and reconciliation of the aggressor, the victim, and the community. Reconciliation comes from the healing offered to partners in conflict; it promotes their peaceful and harmonious co-existence in the community, although this does not mean leaving the cause of the breakdown unaddressed.

Marshall makes an important point in arguing that when Paul speaks of justification by faith he is actually talking about God’s justice that goes beyond the notions of retribution to restoration of the offender. “The justice of God is not primarily or normatively a retributive justice or a distributive justice but a restorative and reconstructive justice, a saving action by God

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that recreates shalom and makes things right.” This view contradicts those who see in the event of the Cross a strict sense of “satisfaction” or “penal substitution” of the sinner for the Son of God in bearing the consequences of sin against God. It envisages God’s restoration of a sinner into a relationship through the Son’s sharing in the sinner’s condition. “The logic of the Cross actually confounds the principle of retributive justice, for salvation is achieved not by the offender compensating for his crimes by suffering, but by the victim, the one offended against, suffering vicariously on behalf of the offender – a radical inversion of the lex talionis:”79 the law of retaliation. Moreover God’s justice is primarily God’s loving mercy. It is for this that Marshall finds forgiveness as the goal and consummation of the justice that heals. Therefore the contagion of love through the imitation of Christ cannot be achieved without forgiveness.

5.3.5 Embodying Christ’s Forgiveness

Christian imitation of God’s gift of forgiveness presupposes that forgiveness will be granted unconditionally to the perpetrators of crimes, those who inflict injury, those who cause pain, and those who take pleasure in being angels of suffering and death in the world. For Christians, unconditional forgiveness is an imperative because they acknowledge that they have been forgiven unconditionally in the Cross, death and resurrection of Christ. Célestin Musekura, citing Don McLellan, argues that Christian imitation of God’s forgiveness has to do with the realization that “the person who has experienced forgiveness will appreciate the enormity of this gift, and will in gratitude offer forgiveness to all who may offend him or her. Failure to offer forgiveness indicates a devaluation of God’s forgiveness, and to devaluate it, according to Jesus,

78 Ibid., 126
79 Ibid., 65-66
is to despise it.” Two very important contemporary contributions to the subject of forgiveness rooted in divine forgiving action in Christ come to mind: L. Gregory Jones’ *Embodying Forgiveness* and Miroslav Volf’s *Exclusion and Embrace*. Due to the immensity and richness of these works it is impossible to do them justice here but they stand as pointers to the important place that forgiveness has in Christian *lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex agendi*.

L. Gregory Jones is perplexed by how much the demand for retributive justice and firm punishment instead of forgiveness has been on the rise even among Christians in our world despite the clear message of the gospel about forgiveness. Gregory Jones claims that psycho-therapeutic accounts and philosophical treatment of forgiveness have not taken into consideration two important aspects of the subject of forgiveness. The first flaw is that psycho-therapeutic accounts have not taken into consideration the seriousness of sin, but have emphasized improvement of interpersonal relationships and healing of the emotional traumas as the goal of forgiveness. This emphasis for Gregory Jones obliterates the role of the triune God in the process of forgiveness, in this way making forgiveness purely a human enterprise. For Gregory Jones to relegate forgiveness to the realm of human endeavor is to injure the very core of Christian theology. For him the process of forgiveness must take seriously the pervasive character of sin and transgression in the community. He argues that forgiveness “is at the heart of Jesus’ life and of the apostle Paul, it is featured in the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed, it is central to the Church’s celebration of baptism and Eucharist, and it is a unifying feature among the doctrine of God, Christ, the Church and ethics and politics.”

Gregory Jones criticizes

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psycho-therapeutic methods toward forgiveness because of their emphasis laid on isolated individuals, on what he calls “momentary individual transactions.” The materials which become the base of the momentary individual transaction are the words or feelings of the hurt felt by the victim. Unfortunately, as we have already argued above, these words and feelings do not actually express the historical factness (truth) of what really happened, but how the emotional trauma and interpersonal betrayal color or even obscure what happened and above all fail to address the pervading mystery of sin.

Secondly, Gregory Jones argues that some philosophical arguments for forgiveness are “fundamentally misleading” because they start with God only to end up with dethroning God. Musekura observes that forgiveness according to Gregory Jones is “the means by which God’s love moves toward reconciliation in the wake of the sin and evil that mar God’s good creation.” Therefore Gregory Jones sees the failure of both the psycho-therapeutic and philosophical accounts of forgiveness in taking forgiveness as a response to human hurt and injury instead of a response to what God has already done in the lives of the believers through the death of Christ. In another way what Gregory Jones is driving at is that “the overarching context of a Christian account of forgiveness is the God who lives in trinitarian relations of peaceable, self-giving communion and thereby willing to bear the cost of forgiveness in order to restore humanity to that communion in God’s eschatological kingdom. That is, in the face of human sin and evil,

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82 L. Gregory Jones, “Crafting Communities of Forgiveness, in Interpretation, 54, No. 2 (2000), 125
83 L. Gregory Jones, Embodying Forgiveness: 211,
84 Célestin Musekura, An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness, 81
God’s love moves toward reconciliation by means of costly forgiveness.”85 The contemporary world following philosophers is in error on three counts:

1) They have tended to assume that philosophical accounts of forgiveness can be offered independently of any theological convictions. They have assumed that their analysis is congruent with, or at least could be applied without recourse to, Christian understandings; unfortunately, because of their refusal to engage theological arguments, their proposals typically diverge in significant ways from an appropriately Christian account of these issues. 2) Those accounts that have attended to theological issues have tended to do so by engaging a “theistic” perspective rather than a trinitarian doctrine of God. As a result, their accounts of what it means for “God” to forgive have tended to be truncated rather than fully developed, and the links between the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in forgiveness have not been sufficiently explicated. 3) Philosophical accounts of forgiveness have tended to be indebted to theories of morality that are… fundamentally misleading. Insofar as philosophical accounts attend to forgiveness, my Christian account will contend that they ought to do so within the qualified, broadly Aristotelian-Thomist perspective, one that emphasizes forgiveness as a craft in the context of learning virtue.86

The trinitarian model points us to the importance of the community as the place where forgiveness is offered and received, learned and practiced. Therefore forgiveness is a virtue that can be cultivated in/by the Christian community patterned on the Trinity. The imitation of the trinitarian kenotic God is the highest form of authenticity because the one who is imitated is also at the same time the one who gives the possibility through grace to imitate or participate in God’s life. In other words, the goal of imitation is also its source, such that the imitation of the inter-trinitarian kenotic life manifested in Jesus Christ is a gratuitous gift which implicates: grace.

Drawing from Aristotle and Aquinas, Gregory Jones postulates that forgiveness is a “craft” that can be learned through “the cultivation of concrete habits and practices that enable people to discern, confront, and forgive one another for particular sins.”87 It is for this that the

85 L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*: Xii
86 Ibid., 210-211
87 Ibid., 158
Christian community is of great importance in the process of creating habits and practices of forgiveness. “Christians ought to learn the craft of forgiveness and be good at it, live by it, breath it and dream it. As fellow learners in the community, Christians can learn from one another as well as teach each other what it means to give up the right for revenge and retaliation as they seek harmony for the community and holy living for members of the community.”

It is here that we see the eucharistic assembly as the indispensable place in which one can learn and practice forgiveness.

One of the most important functions of the eucharistic assembly in our view is the formation of Christian conscience toward forgiveness and reconciliation. Our analysis of eucharistic theology was meant to bring this reality to the fore. The eucharistic assembly is a negation of the human tendency to egocentrism, exclusion of others and competitive attitudes. The eucharistic assembly in our view is the ground of “unlearning of all those things that divide and destroy communion and learning to see and live as forgiven and forgiving people.” This assembly shows in its celebration that “the goal of this unlearning and learning is the holiness of communion – with God, with others, and with the whole creation. We are called to do this most specifically, though by no means exclusively, among those who seek to live in truthful communion with God and with one another in Christian community.”

Eucharistic communities, as united bodies, are supposed to be neighborhood centers where the learning of forgiveness and unlearning of bad habits which prevent forgiveness and reconciliation should be a way of life.

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88 Célestin Musekura, *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness*, 81

89 L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*: 164

90 Ibid., 164
Nevertheless, Gregory Jones is aware that no one is a master, a graduate, and expert of the school of forgiveness. This is so because this school is not a code of rules, formulas, techniques, and strategies, but it is a school that opens us up to be approached by the other who makes us to come face to face with our own poverty, limitation and weakness. Therefore, it would be right to argue that no one learns forgiveness before one has actually forgiven another person, neither does the previous act of forgiveness make us champions of the future situation which needs forgiveness. It is a craft that is learned in daily practice, more so the day one concretely forgives the transgressor. In other words, it is only learned through practicing it within the community. The learning comes after one has already practiced the craft because forgiveness is never a thing in the past or in the future but a thing that becomes real only by offering it now.

Gregory Jones concludes:

The craft of forgiveness involves the ongoing and ever-deepening process of unlearning sin through forgiveness and learning, through specific habits and practices, to live in communion – with the triune God, with one another, and with the whole creation. This priority of forgiveness is a sign of the peace of God’s original creation as well as the promised consummation of that creation in God’s kingdom, and also a sign of the costliness by which such forgiveness is achieved. In this sense, then, forgiveness indicates the ongoing priority of the Church’s task to offer the endlessly creative and gratuitous gift of new life in the face of (often horrifying) sin and evil.91

Such being the case, Christian forgiveness is nothing less than a “response to God’s gracious and forgiving love, an expression of a commitment to a way of life – the cruciform life of holiness in which we seek to unlearn sin and learn the ways of God through repentance – and a means of reconciliation in the midst of particular sins, the specific instances of brokenness.”92 An important insight we get from Gregory Jones is that the goal of Christian forgiveness is not merely the absolution of guilt, but, more importantly, the conversion of hearts toward

91 Ibid., Xii-Xiii
92 Célestin Musekura, An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness, 80
reconciliation of human beings to God, communion among human beings and unity with the entire creation. This conversion of heart can be achieved by learning in the community to approach and be approached by the other in whom we see both our face and the face of Christ.

Another important contribution to the contemporary reflection on forgiveness we want to call to our attention is Miroslav Volf’s notion of “exclusion and embrace.” Volf prepares for us a framework in which to deal with issues ranging from tribalism, ethnocentrism and group identity during and after violence to hurt and death. In his project, Volf is dealing with issues of exclusion of one group from another and the growing intolerance between tribal, ethnic and national groups even within the Church community. Volf seeks to define the future of the human race in such social constructs of “otherness.” He realized that after or during a situation of conflict the operative mentality is that of exclusion of each other according to group identities. Thus, the process reconciliation should pay attention to justice for victims of hurt and mercy for the perpetrator in order to call on both the victims and victimizers to embrace in a new future.

Volf is mesmerized by a growing resistance to “otherness” especially the other who hurts us in our society even among Christians, such that the easiest route taken by many is exclusion of all who are neither “us” nor “like us.” It is this that Volf sees as real sin in the world that builds and even enhances the spiritual and physical alienation from God and one another. Volf defines sin in its social construct as follows: “a refusal to embrace the other in the otherness, a desire to purge him from one’s world, by ostracism or oppression, deportation or

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93 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 9

94 Ibid., 126, Volf writes: “going one’s own way’ is the boldest dream of many a person caught in the vortex of violence can muster the strength to dream, ‘Too much injustice was done for us to be friends,’ too much blood was shed for us to live together’... A clear line will separate ‘them’ from ‘us.’ They remain ‘they’ and we will remain ‘we,’ and we will never include ‘them’ when we speak of ‘us.’”
liquidation. The exclusion of the other is an exclusion of God.” Volf’s emphasis on “group purity,” as a reason for the exclusion of others, resonates with Girard’s argument that the problems of our world do not lie in “differences” or “otherness” but in the exacerbated desire for convergence and resemblance. These two attitudes are at the heart of the theory of exclusion. The process of exclusion in order to bring about “purity” of a group is achieved through convergence and resemblance. In Volf’s view, the process of exclusion takes place in three ways: elimination, assimilation and abandonment.

1) **Elimination**: in extreme cases we kill and drive out. To ensure that the vengeance of the dead will not be visited upon us in their progeny, we destroy their habitation and their cultural monuments… This is exclusion as elimination, most recently at work with such shameless brutality in places like Bosnia and Rwanda.

2) **Assimilation**: you can survive, even thrive, among us, if you become like us; you can keep your life, if you give up your identity… we will refrain from vomiting you out … if you let us swallow you up.

3) **Abandonment**: if others neither have goods we want nor can perform services we need, we make sure that they are at a safe distance and close ourselves off from them so that their emaciated and tortured bodies can make no inordinate claims on us.

Good examples of abandonment are how the Rwandans were abandoned by the international community during the genocide in 1994 and how in many of our cities the poor continue to be abandoned in the ghettos.

Volf sees the desire for purity, “they” are not “us” and “we” are not “them,” being a source of exclusion at two levels: “I exclude the enemy from the community of humans as I exclude myself from the community of sinners.” Evidently, group identity, group pride, and self-proclaimed innocence is the foundation of exclusion and its consequent violence. Volf finds


96 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 74-75

97 Ibid., 124
the future of the human race in the reaffirmation of the importance of otherness and so he advocates a theology of embrace where the acknowledgment of differences is not a curtailment of communion but rather a foundation of real communion. At the heart of the theology of embrace advocated by Volf is the will to love and embrace “otherness,” those different from us, those we consider alien and having nothing in common with us. The rich soil in which the theology of embrace grows is the hospitality that makes an individual to open his/her hands only to close them around the other person different from us as a sign of saying, ‘I welcome you into my life.’ Like Gregory Jones, Volf sees the foundation of this theology in the relationships of the trinitarian persons. However Volf draws some insights from John Zizioulas' studies in personhood and the Church. The concept of “person” in God proposed by Zizioulas is what the Cappadocian Fathers of the Church had in mind, where communion and otherness became a reality. They wanted to show that God is more than a unit but a community where there is genuine diversity as well as union.

The notion of personhood and uniqueness in the triune God as the foundation of true communion postulated by Zizioulas is summarized as follows:

The survival of a personal identity is possible for God not on account of his substance but on account of his trinitarian existence. If God the Father is immortal, it is because his unique and unrepeatable identity as Father is distinguished eternally from that of the Son and of the Spirit, who call him Father. If the Son is immortal, he owes this primarily not to his substance but to his being the “only-begotten” (note here the concept of uniqueness) and his being the one in whom the Father is “well pleased.” Likewise the Spirit is “life-giving” because he is “communion” (2 Cor. 13:14). The life of God is eternal because it is personal, that is to say, it is realized as an expression of free communion, as love. Life and love are identified with the person: the person does not die only because it is loved and loves; outside the communion of love the person loses its uniqueness and becomes a being like other beings, a “thing” without absolute “identity” and “name,” without a face. Death for a person means ceasing to love and to be loved, ceasing to be

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98 John Zizioulas, Being as Communion Studies in Personhood and the Church, (New York, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), postulates that otherness is not an impediment to communion but a condition of its possibility.
unique and unrepeatable, whereas life for the person means the survival of the uniqueness of its hypostasis, which is affirmed and maintained by love.\textsuperscript{99}

Volf drawing from this trend of thought argues that “the one divine person … includes the other divine persons in itself; it is what it is only through the indwelling of the other. The Son is the Son because the Spirit indwells him; without this interiority of the Father and the Spirit, there would be no Son. Every divine person is the other persons, but he is the other persons in his own particular way.”\textsuperscript{100} Christian personality for Volf draws its identity from the trinitarian personhood where otherness does create walls of hostility but opens up itself to allow the other to be received as other. This is what Volf calls “catholic personality,” “personality enriched by otherness, a personality which is what it is because multiple others have been reflected in it in a particular way.”\textsuperscript{101}

The trinitarian uniqueness and communion of persons is the foundation of Volf’s theology of embrace or forgiveness in a social order. Musekura sums up Volf’s argument by saying:

The implication of this divine self-donation is that 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 through atonement, so also should we – whoever our enemies and whoever we may be. Christians are therefore called to embrace others, including those who are for any reason strange to them and those from whom they have been estranged. This call to embrace others can be fulfilled through forgiveness.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{99} John Zizioulas, Being as Communion Studies in Personhood and the Church, (New York, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 48-49


\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 199

\textsuperscript{102} Célestin Musekura, An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness, 90
The embrace that Volf advocates centers on naming the wrongdoing and condemning it, on one hand and on the other, giving the wrongdoers the gift of not counting their trespasses against them. For Volf “the heart of forgiveness is the generous release of a genuine debt. The condemned wrongdoing has been lifted from the wrongdoer’s shoulders.” The forgiveness of others lies in the Christian realization that others are bound to our humanity by cords with which the triune God is a communion of life and love. In the same vein with Gregory Jones, Volf sees that the creation of communities of embrace and forgiveness cannot be a product of psycho-therapeutic activity or even have its origin in psychology. Forgiveness should have its origin and source “in the self-giving love of the divine Trinity as manifested on the Cross of Christ.” Nevertheless Volf recognizes that genuine forgiveness is a fruit of merciful justice. He writes:

A genuine embrace, an embrace that neither play-acts acceptance nor crushes the other, cannot take place until justice is attended to. The will to embrace includes in itself the will to determine what is just and to name wrong as wrong. It includes the will to rectify the wrongs that have been done, and it includes the will to reshape the relationship to correspond to justice, it does not require the establishment of strict justice. The pursuit of embrace is precisely an alternative to constructing social relations around strict justice. It is a way of creating a genuine and deeply human community of harmonious peace in an imperfect world of inescapable injustice.

It is important to acknowledge that forgiveness or embrace is a gratuitous gift from God to the victim who is open to God’s grace and from the victim to the offender. The victim moved by the grace of God accepts the breakdown of the walls of hostility and enter into the threshold of loving mercy.

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103 Miroslav Volf, Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 2005), 130

104 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 25

The victim, instead of exercising bitterness, exclusion and strict justice, exercises loving mercy, care and forgiveness. It is for this that Volf concludes that “forgiveness is the boundary between exclusion and embrace.”\textsuperscript{106} Musekura captures Volf rightly by saying that “forgiveness provides an opportunity to see through the eyes of the heart instead of through pain and hurt. With forgiveness, a possibility to embrace has been created and the threshold of exclusion has been crossed.”\textsuperscript{107} Forgiveness is an embrace of the enemy who has hurt us by making him/her a neighbor whom we must take care of as in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30). Both Gregory Jones and Volf offer us important insights into the theology of reconciliation based on the Trinity, paschal mystery, and Christian community, by emphasizing that the forgiveness of sins is the heart of the Christian gospel. The theology of reconciliation, as a contagion of love, must take seriously the importance of the community of faith and its spiritual resources in trying to make concrete in the world the experience of the healing justice of God as we await its fulfillment in the eschaton.

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our whole project this far, and more specifically enriched by the analysis of the New Testament terminology of “reconciliation,” has brought to the fore some very important conclusions for the experience, practice and theology of reconciliation. Our analysis has revealed that reconciliation arises from the need to heal the brokenness experienced at such a great scale in our world. The experience of brokenness in human relations cannot be taken in isolation from the broken human relationship with God. Therefore reconciliation has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. First and foremost reconciliation is a gratuitous gift of God made visible

\textsuperscript{106} Miroslav Volf, \textit{Exclusion and Embrace}, 247

\textsuperscript{107} Célestin Musekura, \textit{An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness}, 93
in the Christ-event and then a promise to be fulfilled by the working of the Holy Spirit in history. Therefore, reconciliation is a gift already given and a promise of a gift in the future: a gift rooted in the theology of the self-emptying triune God. The notion of a gift already given and a promise of a gift make the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father and the Son, the condition of possibility of reconciliation. It is for this reason that reconciliation frustrates and eludes all forms of scientific methodologies that promise a systematic way to the end. Reconciliation “like a birth it is chaotic and unpredictable, disrupting our illusions of control”\textsuperscript{108} of its process.

Notwithstanding the fact that it is primarily the work of the triune God, we can also deduce from Pauline texts that it is not only the work of the Trinity, but also the manifestation of the very life of the Trinity as communion \textit{par excellence}. It has its source in God’s kenotic existence or God’s self-surrender, first within the Godhead and then in creation. Reconciliation, a fruit of the divine kenotic existence, can only be attributed to the work of Christians as human kenotic existence in terms of the imitation of God in Christ through grace. Christ’s reconciling work on the Cross reveals the Trinitarian life of love: God is love. Therefore the Christian work for reconciliation is an imitation of God’s loving stance even toward enemies, or, to put it in another way, it is a propagation of love where hatred, violence and death would reasonably be the order of existence. It is an establishment of communion where exclusion would have been the only way of existence.

Giving a summary of our whole project, it makes sense to argue that by virtue of having created, God risked having God’s beloved creation, through human freedom, reject God. “God’s faithfulness to his creation, which is also his faithfulness to his will for communion with creation, is the motive for reconciliation, for a new beginning with fallen creation, which is

\textsuperscript{108} William J. Danaher, “Some Reflections on the Theology of Reconciliation,” No. 7
rooted in the triune being of love.”  
Reconciliation is therefore the re-establishment of the originally intended relationship between God and creation. This is done by God’s faithful commitment to creation for which God did not withhold God’s self, handed over the Son to his fate on the Cross, making that event the center of God’s new creation. Consequently, at the heart of the theology of reconciliation are the covenant and the covenantal relationship between God and creation. In this relationship God is always faithful and creation often times unfaithful. Jesus is the only human being who remained faithful to the covenantal relationship with God even to his bitterest end, the Cross. Therefore, all who have been baptized into the death of Christ are called to imitate Christ’s covenantal stance, which led him to identify himself with sinners against the covenant, in their lostiness. Such being the case, in addition to the trinitarian self-emptying existence, our proposed theology of reconciliation is highly hinged on creation and covenant.

Drawing from the Pauline notion of new creation, reconciliation and creation, especially creatio ex nihilo, are coterminous or put more appropriately, reconciliation is the continuation of creation. The sequence involves God creating the world, followed by victimization of the Son of God on the Cross, then the renewal of creation from chaos (new creation) in the resurrection and the sustenance of this new creation through the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit brings about total renewal in people who were once estranged from God and from each other. Above all, new creation is not just a restoration of the old, but a transformation of interpersonal, cultural and socio-political relationships with agape although acknowledging that the other has hurt us. The newness of creation lies in the fact that we now deliberately choose to live with our former and potentially dangerous enemies in a new world where vengeance gives

109 Christoph Schwöbel, “Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction,” 33
way to forgiveness. Reconciliation is “new creation, the new creature is the jewel of God’s love, it is the most delicious fruit of the extreme kenosis of the Son.”110

After the event of kenosis in creation, the Son of the Father will always have the marks of that event, i.e., there will be no time after that event when he will only be divine. The Son through the incarnation will forever be Divine-Human. Reconciliation by extension is a movement into a new realm that will not just be a restoration of who the person was before the wound, but a transformation of the wounded into a healer. It is for this that the wounded, aware of the scar of violence done to them, take the first step and pay the price for reconciliation. The offended who actually initiates the process in a way would be like saying to the offender, “I know how dangerous you are, have been and can be but I have decided to live with you in peace and harmony in a new future.” This presupposes a genuine encounter or a willingness to experience “the fellowship of suffering”111 between the former enemies, who were bound together by cords of hatred, vengeance, violence, dehumanization and shame. This encounter aims at freeing them both and to bind them together by cords of mutual respect, self-giving and forgiving love. Therefore the victim and the victimizer need each other in the process of coming to reconciliation through offering forgiveness and receiving forgiveness respectively. Reconciliation is essentially new creation where the old passes away in order to let the new take effect through the work of the Spirit.


111 Christopher Marshall, Beyond Retribution: 277, argues for the importance of genuine encounter between the offended and the offender “because they are bound together to the event, both victim and offender need each other to experience the liberation and healing from the continuing thrall of the offense. The offender needs the victim to trigger or sharpen his contrition, to hear his confession, remit his guilt, and to affirm his ability to start afresh. The victim needs the offender to hear the pain, answer her questions, absorb her resentment, and affirm her dignity. Each holds the key to the other’s liberation.”
The New Testament has also revealed to us that through faith in Christ we have been charged with the responsibility to witness to the reconciling power of God as Good News for the world. In this case, our focus is not reconciliation itself, but the reconciler *par excellence* himself. Therefore, all forms of reconciliation processes that begin with anything other than the reconciler himself beg the question. Echoing Girard, the reason why we should begin from the revelation made by Jesus is that Christian faith is so clear about the soteriological powerlessness of fallen humanity. This means at the heart of reconciliation is the kenosis of the Son of God who charts the way that Christians must follow. Moreover, true Christian discipleship is an imitation of Jesus’ stance toward enemies and all those who are different from us. Reconciliation is attributed to humanity only because the reconciler himself has endured the consequences of human alienation from God (sin and death) by becoming as human beings are so that humanity may be the righteousness of God in him. “The reconciliation that was once initiated by God in and through Christ’s death on the Cross is continued down through the ages, Paul’s time and ours included, through the ministry of the gospel.”112 In this regard, all interpersonal, social, and political processes of reconciliation can be attributed to a ministry of the imitation of Christ through whom we were touched by the unconditional love of a trinitarian kenotic God. This ministry is a fruit of an experience that does not leave us where we were, but transforms us into new creation, living no longer for ourselves but for Christ and others.

Reconciliation announces God’s unconditional forgiveness of sins even when human beings are still transgressing. This also opens our eyes to see that in biblical reconciliation there is no mutuality in steps: it is not a reciprocal act between God and humanity. This view, like

112 Richard K. Baawobr, “Paul’s Call for Reconciliation...” 186
Girard’s view, contradicts the philosophy of Heraclitus echoed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and (François-Marie Arouet) Voltaire: “war is the father and king of all.” Christian faith, on the other hand, promises us that ‘any change’ from the situation of enmity or chaos for the better is the goal of the gospel which proclaims that Christ is our peace. In positing Christ as our peace, we are saying that all forms of retaliation, punishment and retribution have no place in creation of peace and harmony. In the same vein, Schwöbel says that the promise of peace is based on the reality that “Christ died for us while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8).

Reconciliation understood from this theological perspective is not based on a mutual agreement that has to be established first, but on a one-sided step to break up the pattern of the mutuality of enmity. Reconciliation is based on a one-sided offer of peace where there was conflict. The one who offers reconciliation is the one who must pay the price for the renewal of the relationship in the sense that there can be no retribution for the past misdeeds.

The hope and challenge that we are faced with is making the paradigm of non-mutuality (the one who wants reconciliation takes the first step and also pays the price for such a step) in steps a way to reconciliation in our society today because it categorically contradicts what has been conceived as the normal way of proceeding. The way which is conceived as normal in the process of reconciliation is that the offender takes a step toward the offended which prompts the step of the offended toward the offender. A reversal of this order can only be conceived as a self-surrender to a fate that might demand more pain: even the life of the offended. It is for this that the Cross and forgiveness offered on it are central to all processes of reconciliation. This means that reconciliation can only be rightly conceived as a divine self-surrender in the first place, then, through imitation of the triune God it can experientially be conceived as a human self-surrender to the “other,” couched in the Cross and forgiveness. Therefore our project proposes that

\[^{113}\text{Rene Girard, } \text{Violence and the Sacred, 144}\]

\[^{114}\text{Christoph Schwöbel, } \text{"Reconciliation: From Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction," 36}\]
reconciliation begins with the offended not the offender, though it is important that they encounter each other.

The toughest problem in all processes of reconciliation is to get people who have hurt each other, who disagree with one another, and those who feel that we are “us” and they are “them” to the table to talk about the transformation of their relationships for the better. The difficulty lies in the absence of the common ground on which to begin their discussion and transformation, except pain, hatred and mutual mistrust. It is for this that our project proposes the basic Christian community or eucharistic assembly where we find ourselves with all our differences: ethnic, socio-political, economic, racial, victim and victimizer coming together at the Lord’s Table as the common ground. However, it is not the table for its own sake, which is the common ground, but that which convokes this table: God’s self-giving and forgiving love is set as the common ground for reconciliation.

At this table all those who are scattered like grain on the hills are gathered to become one bread, one body, and one Spirit in Christ. Therefore, this table cannot be authentically ascended to with individualistic and self-serving motives, but with promptings that are relational and communal. It is this basic Christian community that has the responsibility of forming consciences that will have forgiveness, understood as merciful justice, as the integral Christian virtue and reconciliation as the loving response to God’s kenotic love. The Church’s involvement in social, cultural and political transformation depends on the love of its members for one another. Jesus was very clear when he sat at table with his disciples and said: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
(John 13:34-35). The Church’s work of reconciliation in the public sphere will only be effective as a contagion of love that is already lived in eucharistic assemblies.

Another important aspect of our discussion is that the gift of reconciliation is meant for the entire world and not only for Christians. Thus, it makes sense to end this section with what we started this chapter: the role of Christianity and the Church in social and even political reconciliation. The Church has a twofold function in the process and experience of social and political reconciliation. The first is that the Church is a community of reconciliation since it is born out the Christ-event; it has “to witness to the world not only in the proclamation of the gospel in word and sacrament, but also in its critical and constructive engagement in the political, social and cultural life.”  

115 This means that if the catch-word is witness to Christ’s reconciling mission, then the primary focus of the Church is not reconciliation but the reconciler without whom it will act following the logic of “war is the father and king of all things.” Moreover the Church must be humble enough to acknowledge that it cannot claim to bring reconciliation to the un-reconciled world. The church’s only reason for working in this field is that it already celebrates and proclaims in its liturgy that God has reconciled the world to God’s self by paying and being the price of reconciliation. The victim of reconciliation, who is present in the Church’s worship, is the one who reconciles and sends the Church out “Go in peace, glorifying God by your life.”  

116 Rinaldo Ronzani is right to call to our attention that “the Church as a reconciled and reconciling community cannot forget that at the source of her gift and mission of reconciliation is the initiative of God who is Love (1 John 4:7-12).”  

117 Christ sends

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115 Ibid., 38

116 Roman Missal’s rite of dismissal

Christians who have just experienced God’s reconciling mercy in the liturgical assembly, to spread the contagion of love where there is hatred and division.

The second is more than a function: it is a way in which the Church should center her ministry on Christian resources in dealing with the public arena. Since the Church’s involvement in the social, cultural and political spheres is the fruit of its being touched by the love of the triune God, then, the Church must begin its ministry with Christian resources of reconciliation and not with psychotherapy, philosophy and other social sciences. The Church’s discourse on reconciliation has the following resources: God’s kenotic love, the Son’s vicarious death, the apostolic tradition, especially according to Paul, the sacramental and authentic Christian living. This is to say that God the Father is the initiator of reconciliation, the Son is the mediator, Paul and his co-workers and by extension all Christians, are proclaimers. The Holy Spirit is the fulfiller through whom it is actualized in individuals who hear the proclaimed gospel and openly accept it through faith as God’s word of friendship with us and also with the entire public sphere. The Church can only be involved in social and political processes of reconciliation because the biblical witness clearly gives reconciliation a cosmic or universal character. The universal character which is first and foremost eschatological is central to why the Church should live here and now what is yet to be fulfilled in the final consummation of all things in Christ, the Lord of all creation, at the end of history.
CHAPTER V

6.0 THE URGENCY OF RECONCILIATION FOR THE CHURCH OF AFRICA

The Church on the continent of Africa, since 1994, had the opportunity of coming together for two ordinary assemblies of the Synod of Bishops for Africa to evaluate its nature and mission. The first was convoked by Pope John Paul II in 1994 with a theme: “The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000.” Its leading scriptural theme was “You are my Witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The second Synod was announced by John Paul II in 2004 and finally convened by Pope Benedict XVI from 4th-25th October 2009 with a theme: “The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: You are the Salt of the Earth... You are the Light of the World” (Mt 5:13-14). The themes that these synods reflected on were the nature and mission of the Church in Africa in its social context.

The most important questions raised by the synods were: how does the Roman Catholic Church understand itself on the continent? What is the Church’s evangelizing mission given the context of Africa, menaced by all sorts of problems which have led to terrible human suffering? This chapter will be answering these questions of the synods in three sections. The first section will briefly highlight the outcomes of the Synods: the nature of the Church-as-family and mission as reconciliation, justice and peace - although our main interest is the theme of reconciliation. The second section will show that the nature of the Church as family has great repercussions for the wider society of Africa in its pursuit of reconciliation. Family in Africa is a place where values of solidarity, hospitality, care, dialogue, and love are taught and enhanced for the promotion of the family’s life force. Propagation and enhancement of life are the driving force of all activities in an African family. The urge to propagate and enhance the family life
force in Africa makes demands on every individual member of the family. Unfortunately, family loyalty sometimes becomes so powerful as to obscure one’s loyalty to Christ’s gospel. The last section will concentrate on the Church’s commitment to reconciliation in Africa. This section will highlight the importance of the proclamation of word of God, conversion to Christ and authentic Christian witness. We will end this chapter by emphasizing the necessity of mediation and the prerequisites for choosing mediators for the processes of reconciliation.

6.1.1 The First Synod for Africa

The first Synod of Bishops for Africa in reflecting theologically on the being and mission of the Church in Africa chose as its primary way to describe the Church: “the Church-as-Family of God.” This came as a response to a soul-searching question raised by the General Relator of the Synod, Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum of Dakar (Senegal). He asked: “Church of Africa, what must you now become so that your message may be relevant and credible?” At the end of the Synod it was clear that what expressed concisely the nature of the Church appropriate for Africa was Church-as-Family of God. This image of the Church is already used in Christian literature, but it became for Africa an important image because of the centrality of the family in the African worldview. The Synod adopted Church-as-Family to be its guiding idea for the evangelization of Africa because it spoke eloquently to the social context of Africa. Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson during the second Synod reiterated the understanding of the first Synod about the nature of the Church in Africa as “family of God” by saying it “is an expression of the truth of the Church and of its identity as sharing in the life of the triune God through

Family in Africa is the place where life and love are shared, making it the place of reconciliation. Richard K. Baawobr also sees the family into which one is put by God as the place of care for one another, dialogue, trust and forgiveness; aspects which make for true reconciliation. He postulates that:

Living active reconciliation in the Church-as-family of God in Africa is one such way of sharing the same life and love that we all receive from the same God and Father. Just as brothers and sisters do not choose one another, so too, within the Church-Family of God, people do not choose one another. Together they are called into life by the same Father God to be his Children and thus brothers and sisters of one another.3

Thus, the first Synod established the foundations for the second one, which invested its energy in exploring what would be the relevant mission for the African Church which understands itself as a family of God.

The First Synod took place within the gloomy cloud of the Rwanda Genocide, the end of apartheid regime in South Africa, not forgetting the challenges of justice and transformation that needed to characterize the new nation, xenophobic attacks, civil wars, tribal and ethnic clashes, the influx and outflow of refugees, displacement, hateful relationships between Christianity and African Traditional Religions (ATR) and violence between Christians and Muslims. Reflecting on the image of the Church-as-family, A. E. Orobator writes: “if the church in Africa understands itself as family, its message or mission cannot become relevant and credible without

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2 Cardinal Peter Kwodo Turkson, “Relatio Post Disceptationem: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. You are the Salt of the Earth... You are the Light of the World,” (Mt 5:13-14), Vatican.va, 2009, 9, (emphasis in the text), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091005_rel-ante_disceptationem_en.html, the emphasis in italics are Turkson's.

addressing the social context of the African family, that is, Africans. In the same vein Pope John Paul II drawing from the deliberations of the Synod sees “family” as an image that expresses very well the nature of the Church in Africa. He states:

The Synod Fathers acknowledged it (family) as an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelization will thus aim at building up the Church as Family, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favoring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations.

It is noteworthy to hear immediately in the papal exhortation the values of an African family put side-by-side with the vices that threaten the institution of the family. It is the vices threatening the values of the family that have put Africa into such a mess.

The breakdown of the family and the limited scope of family as only those of one’s clan, tribe, and ethnic community threaten the richness of the family ecclesiology. Moreover the Church-as-family “can lay claim to credibility and relevance only when it becomes attentive, sensitive, and responsive to the predicament of Africans and contributes concretely to the transformation and renewal of the African society.” At the heart of this transformation and renewal lies the family in its basic entity: nuclear and extended family in African conception. It is interesting to see that the issues of the African context raised in the document touch the family in its extended nature, clan, tribe, and even its ethnic extension. Family is at the heart of the African worldview and more importantly the key to understanding the nature of the Church in

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6 Agbonkhianmeghe Emmanuel Orobator, *The Church as Family*: 13
Africa. We will treat the understanding and centrality of family in Africa later on in the text, but for now it suffices to highlight the wisdom behind the Synod’s choice of the nature of the Church as family.

After concurring with the bishops in positing family as the nature of the Church in Africa, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (EIA) made evangelization or mission its central theme. The document presented five ways through which evangelization was to be effected in African context. It postulated evangelization: as proclamation, as inculturation, as dialogue, as justice and peace and, as social communication. The Synod and EIA began to understand evangelization differently from the traditional missionary methods of doing mission, which epitomized “winning” souls for God, converting the unconverted, implanting the Church as a divine institution among the heathens. Nevertheless this Synod still remained comfortable within the familiar realm of the Church that sees its mission as winning souls for God: how many can we bring into our sheepfold this year? In the words of Ernest Ezeogu, the first Synod focused on “the mission of the Church *ad intra*... interested in the Church and her growth,”7 i.e., concerned with the deepening of faith within the community and bringing more people into the Church. In this conception of mission, the Church stands as the beneficiary of her evangelizing endeavors.

The Synod depicted very well the reality of the Church and its self-understanding as it was named the Synod of “the resurrection and hope.” Convoked during the Easter season (10th April – 8th May 1994) it was intended to be a Synod filled with the hope and joy that characterize the resurrection of the Lord. Its Easter mood must be understood as sign of encouragement in a

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hopeless situation to a continent that could have easily yielded to discouragement and despair because of the events we have already mentioned above, especially the Rwandan Genocide. The resurrection theme confronts the helpless image of the Church presented by John Paul II as he compared Africa to a person who fell into the hands of robbers on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho in the Gospel of Luke (10:29-37). “Africa is a continent where countless human beings - men and women, children and young people - are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of the Good Samaritan who will come to their aid.”

Africa is left half dead by the roadside bruised by poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and bad governance, on one hand, and on the other, tribal, ethnic, political and religious conflicts. The resurrection theme inspires a question of the possibility of life and hope in such circumstances.

6.1.2 The Second Synod for Africa

The universal Church in a span of only fifteen years saw a need to convocate another Synod for “Church-as-family” (Africa). It was convoked to be a call to life and hope for the bruised family, to move away from where it is now concerned with its self-understanding in the midst of suffering to where it is supposed to be in service to reconciliation, justice and peace to the wider family of Africa and the world. When the second Synod for Africa was announced there were questions all over Africa: why another Synod even before the full implementation of all the recommendations of the first? Benedict XVI by confirming and convoking this special assembly for Africa was in total agreement with John Paul II who saw reconciliation as an urgent mission for Africa menaced by conflict: “In Africa as elsewhere in the world, the spirit of

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8 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 41
dialogue, peace and reconciliation is far from dwelling in the hearts of everyone. Wars, conflicts and racist and xenophobic attitudes still play too large a role in the world of human relations.”

The second Synod conceived from this context affirms the first and complements it by calling the African Church to understand its evangelizing mission in terms reconciliation, justice and peace. The second Synod compliments the traditional mode of evangelization, which emphasized the growth of the Church in numbers and deepening of faith, by calling the Church’s attention to societal challenges in Africa “such as ethnocentrism, violence, and war,” and to begin addressing them.

Ezeogu raises an important point in arguing that between the first and the second Synods a lot had happened that called the Church to question its mission priorities. Giving Rwanda as an example of the most evangelized country of Africa with ninety percent of the population identifying itself as Christian and sixty-five percent as Roman Catholics at the time of the genocide, Ezeogu laments that something must definitely be wrong with the process that produced these Christians, let alone Catholics. He writes; “what happened in Rwanda was a people evangelized, baptized and confirmed as Christians, who had no idea of reconciliation, justice and peace. This makes a new Synod based on reconciliation, justice and peace not only necessary but urgent.” If the Church in Rwanda had understood itself as a family (Church) where the virtues of forgiveness, justice and peace were learned and lived probably the genocide would not have happened.

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9 Ibid., No. 79

10 Ernest M. Ezeogu, “Evangelization for Reconciliation, Justice and Peace,” 344

11 Ibid., 345
On the other hand, the example of South Africa’s “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (TRC) led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, “shows how much Christians can achieve when they bring Gospel principles to bear on the social-political order.”\textsuperscript{12} It is at this point that you see the necessity of balancing the traditional mode of evangelization, which was more concerned with winning new converts for the Church, with evangelization as the Church’s witness of its being converted to the Lord, the reason for its service to the wider society. Evangelization in this balance makes the converted, those already in the Church, its first recipients and thereafter their witness of being converted to the self-giving Lord Jesus becomes the mission in service to the wider society. This means that those already in the Church should receive the benefits of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ: reconciliation, forgiveness or merciful justice and peace. It is only after this that they can witness in the public sphere to what they already live. To echo Ezeogu we argue that “if mission is understood as proclamation of the good news, then it will be seen that the primary beneficiaries of mission are the evangelized not the evangelizers or the outreach Church.”\textsuperscript{13} The Christian formation of the baptized, those who have already heard the proclaimed word, has to be given priority over the Church’s desire to win over more new souls for God. Benedict XVI did not ask the African Church to abandon the traditional paradigm of evangelization as spreading the faith in order to focus on reconciliation, justice and peace, but rather called Africa to a deeper understanding of evangelization, as a commitment to reconciliation between God and humanity and among humanity.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 345

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 352
It is powerful to see the title that Benedict XVI chose for the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Africae Munus*, “Africa’s Commitment.” Reconciliation, justice and peace become the commitment that the evangelized and evangelizing Church of Africa must take head on. Benedict XVI sees that the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace is a more faithful and effective way of fulfilling John Paul II’s call to new evangelization in Africa. It is to this that the bishops of Africa responded in the second synod as they called it: ‘the Synod of a New Pentecost.’" The synod fathers and all the participants prayed: “that the Spirit of Pentecost may renew our apostolic commitment to making reconciliation, justice and peace prevail in Africa and the rest of the world. May it also not let the immense problems weighing down Africa overcome us, so that we may become “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.” The pope reiterates this prayerful desire of the Synod by saying “inspired by faith working through love (Gal. 5:6), the Church seeks to offer the fruits of love: reconciliation, peace and justice (1 Cor. 13:4-7).” The Church-as-family is supposed to become the central milieu of the fruits of love for the wider community of Africa.

6.2 CENTRALITY OF FAMILY IN AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

It is interesting to see that the Synod documents and the Post-Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus* (AM), are at one in pointing to realities that have brought Africa to this point. They agree that the present situation is conditioned by the past realities like the slave trade and colonization, which remain the source of generation-to-generation trauma and lack of self-esteem

14 Proposition No. 2, of second special assembly for Africa http://www.vatican.va/newsservices/press/sinodo/doc

15 Proposition No. 2, the Second Synod for Africa, 2009

16 Benedict XVI, *Africa’s Commitment: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace; You are the Salt of the Earth... You are the Light of the World, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Africae Munus*, (Nairobi, Kenya, Paulines Publications Africa, 20011), No. 3
and trust. They have also resulted in a lack of unity and solidarity within the African Church. The *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) of the second assembly for Africa and Benedict XVI’s *Africae Munus* outlined several areas that needed urgent attention in walking the road towards reconciliation in Africa. They all agree on obvious issues that need immediate attention but Benedict XVI raises an important point that we cannot emphasize enough, the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural need for reconciliation. His emphasis on reconciliation in the family starting from the elderly, men, women, youth, children is so monumental to this project. It is this return to the family that gives the Church of Africa hope for the future.

At the heart of the African worldview lie two threefold inseparable structures: the visible world of the individual, the extended family and the cosmos, on one hand, and the invisible world of the ancestors, the spirits and God, on the other. The African communal sense depends on this worldview because family unity is based on a common ancestor who founded the community of the clan and tribe. These ancestors still exert a certain influence to the clan and tribal community since they are considered as the “living dead” who can warn, direct, and even be saddened by the moral degradation of their living children. Bénézet Bujo argues that “the relationship between those living on earth and the ancestors is very close, since the living owe their existence to the ancestors from whom they receive everything necessary for life.” More importantly, the “living dead,” ancestors “can enjoy their being ancestors only through the living clan community.”

There is a hierarchical interaction between the two communities of the spirits/ancestors (living-dead) and the community of the living respectively, with God as the

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18 Ibid., 16
source of their life. This is so because in the African view the older one gets the higher the vital force one possesses. It is for this that the spirits/ancestors have a higher vital force than the living because they are in the higher realm than the living.

The proper understanding of life or vital force in the African worldview is not only the fact that nerves transmit stimuli, but all the relational aspects that make life human from its source to its entry into the world of the spirits/ancestors. Therefore, the goal of the interaction between the living and the living-dead “is the increase of vitality within the clan. No one is allowed to keep vitality for oneself, everyone has to share it with the other members of the family and clan.”

Okechukwu Ogbonnaya sees that “the African family is a community that extends itself beyond even those whom we remember or with whom we are conscious of being connected.”

He continues to say that the bond extends to include all those who are “still in the loins of the living (the precarnate), the living (the carnate), and those who have passed on to the world of ancestors and spirit-beings (the discarnate, reincarnate, or the living-dead).”

Aylward Shorter argues that the African conception of the universe is “an ‘organic whole’ – one dynamic organic universe. This organic universe however, has two dimensions, the visible and the invisible.”

The African worldview has a moral binding because anything that stops the interaction between these dimensions of the visible and the invisible reduces the vitality of the community. On the other hand, good behavior makes for the growth of life in all.

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19 Ibid., 16


21 Ibid., 7-11

It is to this end that Laurenti Magesa believes that in African Traditional Religion (ATR) “all principles of morality and ethics are to be sought within the context of preserving human life and its “power” or “force.” Evidently, the African conception of life is not only biological but touches an expansive spectrum of what it means to live. Jean-Marc Ela calls the Church’s attention to this reality as he writes: “the Church must see that the demands of faith are largely rooted in the organization of the city of the earth. It cannot refrain from intervening when the lives and dignity of women and men are threatened.” For this reason, the Church must discover an internal bond between faith and the problems that hinder abundant flow of everyday life. Since life and its enhancement are the reason for family “bondedness” in Africa, Christian teaching cannot take lightly all that threatens life: conflict and wars. Therefore the purpose of the existence of all creation and indeed every individual human being is to serve and enhance the life-force of every member of the family and the entire society. “Ordinarily, the family creates the place par excellence for attaining, protecting and propagating life.” The first Synod’s consensus in positing the ecclesiology of Church-as-family is revealing. The synod must have taken into consideration the central role the family plays in ensuring communion and protecting of life from the forces that diminish it.

The second issue that is necessary for the increase and protection of the life force in an African family is solidarity. What has become the classic reading on this subject is John Mbiti’s 1969 phrase “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,” to which we have already

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25 Agbonkhianmeghe Emmanuel Orobator, The Church as Family: 151

referred above. This view is echoed in the *Ubuntu* (humanness) philosophy popularized by Desmond Tutu during the TRC which produced a miracle that prevented more bloodbaths. Tutu posits that in the African worldview the individual is never isolated from the community. John W. De Gruchy writes: “Fundamental to African culture is the understanding of human being (*ubuntu*) enshrined in the Xhosa proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*: a person is a person through other persons.”27 This famous proverb goes all around Sub-Saharan Africa to indicate that a human being is essentially a social being. Among the Chewa of Zambia it is even derogatory: *Kalikokha nkanyama, tiri tiwiri ntianthu* – he/she who is alone is an animal, but those who are two are human. These proverbs convey the centrality of solidarity and relationships in authentic human existence. However there is no intention whatsoever to obliterate the importance of an individual: the community is only because each individual is part of it. Orobator, making the same point, says “formulated in more succinct terms, in Africa, life epitomizes a *shared experience*. The context of this sharing is the extended family, the clan, the village and the community. Thus, the African says: I belong, therefore I am.”28 In this view, family solidarity is not just a feeling of vague compassion towards someone who is facing misfortunes but it is the “bondedness,” connectedness, relatedness that characterizes what truly makes for a family and clan in African sense.

### 6.2.1 African View of Reconciliation

Life is the central element that holds together an African view of family. Solidarity and service towards one another in the community are ways through which life is propagated,

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28 Agbonkhianmeghe Emmanuel Orobator, *The Church as Family*: 154
increased and protected. Ordinarily, reconciliation in the African context serves to sustain, increase and protect the life force. Reconciliation in Africa takes three dimensions: reconciliation with the self, reconciliation with the visible world of humanity and nature, and reconciliation with the invisible world of God, spirits, and ancestors. Peter Henriot argues that reconciliation in Africa is “an integral reconciliation (which) includes both the invisible (God, spirits, ancestors) and the visible worlds (community, of the living, the cosmos).” In this regard, the sacrament of reconciliation and the rites of social reconciliation are possible only if all the three categories mentioned above are respected.

6.2.3 Reconciliation with the Self, Visible world, and Invisible World

It could appear at first sight that reconciliation in Africa lacks a personal dimension because its “moral ethic,” i.e. knowing the difference between right and wrong, emphasizes the community. Paul Béré rightly argues that this position misses the point because “a close look at (traditional African) reconciliation rites reveals that the process of restoring harmony starts from within oneself; the heart must be engaged and pure, and that means that the performance of the rite requires compliance with certain demands.” In African belief and practice, the possession of abundant life by each person is the criterion for good. Ordinarily, reconciliation in the African context is the restoration of the community’s life and this begins from the individual person’s internal harmony, without which one cannot participate in an African traditional ritual of reconciliation. It is for this reason that abstinence from sex even with one’s own spouse is demanded before the rite in order to let one’s whole being and disposition ready for the rite.

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Being at peace with oneself is not narcissistic, but includes in it the well-being of the entire community: family, clan, and tribe. In De Gruchy’s view “the emphasis is on human sociality, on interpersonal relations, on the need which each person has for others in order to be herself or himself. This is the root of African humanism, and it relates well to biblical anthropology, trinitarian theology, and the idea of Christian community.”

Reconciliation enshrined in African humanism always seeks to heal the wounds left by individual human greed or individualism. Taking the same trend of thought, Desmond Tutu argues that “in the spirit of Ubuntu, the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be integrated into the community he has injured by this offence” Integration into the community is an important component for African reconciliation because wrongdoing does not only affect the two people in feuds, but more so the entire community.

It is remarkable to see that in African understanding, the enemy of the fullness of life does not come from outside the family or the community. Kabasele Lumbala underscores this point:

The ‘Muntu’ (people of all those languages in Africa naming a human being from the root ntu, nthu, tu) do not fear the enemy from outside. Certainly enemies armed with guns can cause carnage. But once they are contained, the group quickly recovers. The same can be said for sorcery. As long as it remains outside, it cannot have an effect on an individual in the family. It must be introduced through the channel of a traitor within the family. ‘The insect that is within the bean is the one that can destroy it with ease,’ says a Luba proverb.

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31 John W. De Gruchy, Christianity and Democracy: 191
32 Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness, (New York, Doubleday, 2000), 54-55
33 François Kabasele Lumbala, Celebrating Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation, (New York, Orbis Books, 1998, what is in the brackets is supplied by this author.)
The injury that an insider causes to the family is more disastrous than the injury inflicted by an outsider. The insider’s treachery destabilizes the whole system that binds the family together: the individual, the visible world of humanity and nature, and the invisible world of God, spirits, and ancestors. It is on the solid foundation of the visible and invisible worlds, central to African worldview, that loyalty to the family is bonded.

The chief/king/queen is the mediator between the world of the living and the world of the living dead. He/she is both the ruler and priest of his/her community and links the visible world of humanity and nature to the invisible world of God, spirits and ancestors. The king/queen presides over the life of the community inasmuch as he/she presides over the healing rites of the injured community, the healing that has consequences even for the world of nature (the cosmos) from which the community gets its sustenance. Béré sums this up by saying that “the physical environment (cosmos) in which the community lives is never conceived as completely external to a person’s life… is the dwelling place of the dead, or rather, the ‘living dead’… (in Senegal it is called) ‘our mother earth,’ for she nourishes and protects all living beings.”  

There is nothing whatsoever that would give a richer understanding to the unity or the communion of the Church in Africa than the notion of family, which cannot stand in isolation from nature, the living-dead, spirits, and God. It is awe-striking to see the centrality of the family coming out vividly in one of the earliest African adaptations of the celebration of the Eucharist, what is popularly known as the *Zairian Rite*, officially known as “The Roman Missal for the

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Dioceses of Zaire.” In this rite, mass begins with the entrance procession, the veneration of the altar, the greeting and the announcement of the theme of the celebration, thereafter what catches one’s eye is the veneration of the saints and ancestors. The invocation of the saints and ancestors is followed by the opening prayer, the readings, the homily and the profession of faith. It is monumental that the penitential act comes only after the word, homily (a prophetic challenge to the community), and profession of faith. “This can be justified because it is the word of God that is revealed to us in the expectation of conversion. The kiss of peace also follows the penitential act. This provides the perspective that reconciliation comes as a fruit of pardon, which serves to emphasize the communal and ecclesial dimension of God’s pardon of everyone.”

At the eucharistic celebration a single family of the living and the living dead come together to praise the God of life. At the eucharistic celebration the Church becomes the family of God, forgiven and forgiving.

At the third level, reconciliation in the African worldview is rooted in God, the source and goal of human life. Béré concludes that “since in African indigenous religions God is the source of life, God must be included in the process of reconciliation that aims at restoring life in its fullness by neutralizing within the person(s) that which impedes life from flourishing.” Just as solidarity in African family, clan or community is meant for the propagation, increase and maintenance of life, reconciliation is meant to heal the community from all that threatens life. What threatens life more than disregard or being in conflict with the very source of life, God? It is with precision that the second assembly for Africa called on all Africans in the words: “Africa family of God! ‘We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God’” (2 Cor 5:20b).

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35 François Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation*, 33-34

6.2.3 Limited Family Worldview and Reconciliation

There is a lot in the bishops’ exhortation to be reconciled to God made to the family that has to be reflected upon, especially the impermeability of the family, clan, and tribe by those from another ethnic community who still remain the ‘other’ unless they are brought into the clan through marriage. Thus far we have exalted the centrality of the family in the African worldview. However the reader would be asking: if in the African worldview the family is so important, why do we have so much conflict on the continent? Where was the ubuntu ethic during the Rwanda Genocide or in the incessant genocidal massacres in Darfur? What has happened to African solidarity in the Congolese massacres and rape of thousands of women and children? If the African worldview is such a solid connection between the visible world of humanity and nature on one hand, and the invisible world of God, spirits and ancestors, on the other, where was this bondedness during the “2007-2008 Kenyan post-election violence (PEV) that left one thousand one hundred dead and three thousand five hundred people injured?” Africa! Family of God, what has gone wrong? These questions have been at the heart of this project because they help us to search where Africa like the rest of the world has missed it all.

Reading Benedict XVI’s AM, the IL, the Lineamenta, the Message of the Second Synod for Africa, and all other documents coming from the second synod, it is necessary to focus on several areas pointed out as in need of urgent reconciliation. The first is the social-political sphere: the IL observed that:

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Some African societies have been ruined by their political leaders. Others have witnessed tragic scenes of xenophobia, where foreigners were looked upon as symbolizing the misfortunes of society and became scape-goats. As a result, persons were burnt alive and hacked; families scattered and villages destroyed. In still other countries, some Particular Churches mention that political parties have used ethnic, tribal or regional sentiments to rally populations to their cause in a conquest for power, instead of fostering living together in peace.

The second is the social-economic sphere where financial mismanagement has resulted into poverty, exploitation, human trafficking and destabilization of family networks. Thirdly, in the socio-cultural sphere, the infiltration of subversive information has rendered the humanism and values of African Traditional Religion (ATR) to appear archaic, therefore luring our society to abandon them completely. On the religious scene there is rivalry in some countries among the Muslims, Christians, and ATR.

In our view, although aware of the danger of putting things simplistically or reducing them to a single cause, we find that what needs immediate attention is the limited openness of an African family to those outside, especially those of other tribes. One example that comes immediately to our attention is the 2007-2008 Kenyan Post-election violence (PEV) that left many dead. Kenyan society, like many Sub-Saharan countries, is highly tribalistic so that even affiliation to a political party highly depends on tribal affiliation. Joseph Kahiga Kiruki reflecting on the atmosphere of Kenya after PEV writes: “it is as if our vision had crumbled to ground zero and we have to start all over again in an endless dialectical process of reaching at the illusive harmonious unity of our multi-ethnic nation – Kenya.” Kahiga identifies tribalism or ethnocentrism, more especially the purity mindset (they are not “us” and we are not “them”) as the source of Kenyan Post-election violence. He continues: “the static mental attitudes, mindsets

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and stereotypes were largely to blame, as our tribal loyalties went beyond the national interests and Church institutional affiliations took a backstage as momentary irrelevancies." Kiruki rightly points out how the Church institutions were unable to be prophetic because their leaders, blinded by tribal affiliation, failed to denounce politicians who were brewing hatred between ethnic communities.

The politicians are easily obeyed by the people because in most cases their assumption to political offices is coterminous with their assumption to familial or tribal leadership roles. Politicians, like family or tribal leaders who are idolized by the people because of their position in the network of the family life force, exert their authority to the point of becoming like mythical Greek gods. “African worldview arrogated immense power of control to the elders, ancestors and gods. Elders are perceived as ‘all knowing.’ What our leaders say is what is ‘true,’ the masses are merely to listen to them.” It is when the affiliation to the people of one’s family, clan, tribe, tribal leaders, ancestors and tribal gods obscure the vision that encourages an embrace of “otherness” that violence and death immerses the whole society in total chaos.

Nigeria is another example where tribal leadership comes before anything else. This is evident in how one goes to the bitterest extremes in order to solicit the approval of the clan for one’s installation as an elder in the community, who will be called “chief,” in order to able run for a political office. The title “chief” does not mean that someone is the king of his community but that he has become an elder whose word commands the obedience of the community members. Joseph A. Umoren argues that “it is noteworthy that in Nigeria, the overall political, economic, and social bankruptcy (national instability) of the entire country is the price to pay for

40 Ibid., 484
satisfying ethnic goals… and that the main culprit of Nigeria’s economic and political demise was tribalism.”42 Tribalism is the disease killing most of African countries because it is clear that in most cases tribal loyalties come before political, economic, and religious loyalties. This is evident because:

Diverse political leaders seek to be crowned as tribal elders or gods with dogmatic, powerful and manipulative authority. Such authority is normal and meticulously obeyed even if it leads to death. Those who die in such obedience are declared martyrs of the tribe and are awarded with cultural medals of bravery post-humus and they remain perpetually in the memory of the living as heroes.43

There is in loyalty to one’s ethnic affiliation a strong blind driving force which unfortunately is at the heart of the actions which abuse, dehumanize, and injure or kill people of other ethnic groups. This blind force of cultural violence seems to justify aggression against a person of the other tribe who poses a threat to one’s tribal pride. John Mwangi states that “ethnic identity, like religion, has a symbolic dimension, which arouses passions linked to pride of a certain group and the values and traditions that have to be defended. Unfortunately, this may be used by a minority to manipulate the masses of poor people to get support for their partisan aims for power struggle, selfish aims, and domination.”44 It comes to its worst when even the National Episcopal Conference, because of the bishops’ ethnic affiliations, is unable to make a prophetic statement to announce the gospel of reconciliation, renounce nepotism, and denounce those who sow seeds of tribal hatred or the imminent danger of violence before, during and after elections.

42 Joseph Umoren, Democracy and Ethnic Diversity in Nigeria, (Lanham, MD, University Press of America, 1996), 9


Consequently, in dealing with violence in the work for reconciliation we cannot afford to lose sight of the cultural, structural and direct acts of violence inherent in ethnocentrism which have brought great suffering and deeper fragmentation of communities in Africa. Ethnicity has a powerful social and political urge on people because the members of ethnic groups are knit together by ties of ancestry, culture, language, religion, and above all there is that strong distinction from others which draws them together in times of strife with other communities. If only Africa could have taken advantage of the ethnic bondedness and extended it to other tribes by looking at them not as rivals, but brothers and sisters under one Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, there would probably be peace in Africa.

The bishops of The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) saw in ethnicity an opportunity for a better African society more than a misfortune or a cause of pain, suffering and death. They stated that:

Having listened to our brothers from the Great Lakes Region, (Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire) we wish to affirm that even though ethnocentrism shows its atrocities in this tragedy (genocide), ethnicity in itself does not connote a negative attitude. On the contrary, ethnicity indicates a gift of God which makes us different one from the other for our mutual enrichment. It is God who makes each one what he is. Ethnicity gives us our social and cultural identity as well as our security. The individual finds his roots and values in his ethnic group.45

Unfortunately, the greatest misfortune that faces African society and the African Church is that we have not been able to tap into the riches of family and ethnicity. It is this blindness to the opportunities that ethnic differences can offer to our Church and society that ethnicity, instead of being a blessing, has become a curse for many Africans whose lives have been twisted forever because of violence.

We believe that it is only by taking seriously what the family is in the African worldview that we can begin to answer the questions we raised above, which can be summed up into: “Africa! Family of God, what has gone wrong?” What has gone wrong with Africa is the same reality found “in all types of worship as seen from different cultures of the world from ancient times to the present, gods (elders) demand human sacrifices. It is as if the more human life and blood is sacrificed the greater the praise and honor of the gods (elders) who demand greater status quo or positions in the constellation of the gods in their power game.” This is what the theory of imitation and its consequent scapegoat mechanism we outlined in the first chapter reveals about Africa: a theater of incessant fratricidal wars.

6.2.4 Graced Conversion from the Prevailing Power of the Social Body

The question we raised about what has gone wrong with Africa confronts the reality of violence and the mimetic contagion in human relationships. Unless violence and its scapegoat mechanism are revealed to human beings by Christ’s self-giving love, the destructiveness of violence will persist because of human ignorance of having been entangled in its nexus. It is only Christ, our peace, who can reveal to us the dangers of violent mimetic contagion. Moreover it is by looking at how Jesus goes through his passion that we get a grip on the reality of social camaraderie in violence and walk the road of conversion. One of the best examples in the gospels of the mimetic contagion and conversion or revelation of human complicity in the contagion is Peter’s denial in the passion stories.

Peter is all human; possessed by the spirit of the crowd he cannot resist the mimetic contagion. When in the crowd one becomes possessed by it. When Peter hears the maid, the

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young girl and the bystanders respectively: “you too were with Jesus the Galilean… This man was with Jesus the Nazarene… you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away” (Mt 27:69-75), he struggles to show that he is not one of the gang. Even if they insist that he is a foreigner and not one of them as his accent gives him away, Peter wants to show that he resembles every one of them. The only way Peter can show that he is one of them is by joining them in the scapegoat game. Peter’s incentives are universal to human nature. He is not a special case, but just a representative of all the apostles and all of us. This is a revelation of what living together does to human beings: you are either one of us or against us. The scene of Peter’s denial reveals very important things which should not be taken for granted. The first is that Peter hates all those persecuting Jesus, but the mob pressure makes him identify with them, leading him to deny Jesus. The second is that even if this mob repels him, he still wants to identify with it because the more this group repels him the more it attracts him with the security against persecution it seems to offer. This is how the same mistakes have been made in society from age to age.

Peter’s denial is infinitely powerful as an example of what society is capable of doing in times of crisis. “Peter is the most spectacular example of mimetic contagion. His love for Jesus is not in question; it is as sincere as it is profound. Yet as soon as the apostle is plunged into a crowd hostile to Jesus, he is unable to avoid imitating its hostility.”  

René Girard emphatically criticizes the interpretations that attribute Peter’s denial to the psychological temperament of the individual person, Peter. The psychological interpretation misses the point which is the uniformity in reaction issuing from the prevailing power of the social body. Girard argues that “in refusing the mimetic interpretation, in looking for the failure of Peter in purely individual

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causes, we attempt to demonstrate, unconsciously of course, that in Peter’s place we would have responded differently; we would not have denied Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., 20} And yet something is revealed in Jesus’ reproach of the Pharisees who build the tombs of the prophets their forefathers killed. What the Pharisees are saying is, “if we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have joined them in shading the prophet’s blood” (Mt 23:30), Jesus knows it is a lie for they would have acted in the same way their fathers did.

Peter’s denial is so important, but more significant is the mention in the text of the reality that Peter didn’t know what he was doing. He is not denying Jesus unconsciously, but he is unconscious of what he is really doing. This is why the most beautiful thing is the ending of the story. “Immediately the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken… (Mt 27:75). The cock reminded Peter of what he had conveniently forgotten, that Jesus had predicted the very thing that would happen. The prediction of Jesus is really not extraordinary, yes the Father may have revealed it to him because he listens to him, but it is more so because he humanly understands better than any of his disciples how human communities work. He knows that Peter will certainly find himself in the situation of collective pressure, of mob pressure in which he will deny him, just as all those who were singing “Hosanna Son of David” had followed a few powerful individuals to persecute him.

Conversion involves being able to hear the cock crow and allow Jesus to look at us, so that like Peter we may be able to understand that we also have joined all those who were persecuting him. This conversion can only be the fruit of grace because it comes only from the gaze of Jesus at us and our open disposition to allow him to reveal our ignorance and
powerlessness before the prevailing power of the social body. This reality is so powerful in the
gospel of Luke because it is not only the cock that crows, but Jesus looks at him. “Only then
does he discover the crowd phenomenon in which he has participated.” ⁴⁹ Immediately Peter
understands that he has behaved like everyone. “In the gospel of Luke, just at the crucial
moment, Jesus too is in the courtyard, and the two – Jesus and Peter – exchange a look that
pierces the disciple’s heart. The question that Peter reads in this look: “Why do you persecute
me?” ⁵⁰ Pointedly, Peter hears from the look: “have you also joined them in scapegoating me?”
Paul will hear the same from the mouth of the Lord on his way to Damascus. Probably the
Church leaders, episcopal conferences, and Christians in Africa need to hear again this question
when tribal loyalties become obstacles to their prophetic role in times of crisis. Christian
conversion in Africa toward reconciliation should be the ability to hear Jesus’ question: “why are
you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4) or have you also joined them in scapegoating me by keeping
silent when you shouldn’t or by being so faithful to your ethnic loyalty even when doing so
would let thousands of innocent people be sacrificed? It is this boldness to stand against the
community pressure or the ability to hear Jesus’ question in agony that the Church in Africa
requires in dealing with ethnic loyalties and reconciliation in times of crisis.

6.3 THE CHURCH’S COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

Taking seriously the African conceptions of life and family, the Church should
understand itself as a sacramental presence of Christ to the world through all those united as one
family by faith in the crucified and risen Lord. There will be no genuine reconciliation in Africa

⁴⁹ Ibid., 191

⁵⁰ Ibid., 191
unless family and ethnicity are given a central place in the ministry of evangelization, i.e., the formation of Christ’s disciples who will not abandon him to join the group of persecutors. This does not mean that Africans should be indifferent to their families, but that they should be able to stand behind the victims, even if the persecutors are from one’s own tribe. Thus, the understanding of the Church in Africa as family “should pick up the traditional African communal principles, enhance them with the goodness of Jesus Christ, and enable caring communities to develop and thrive.”

This is what John Paul II’s, *Ecclesia in Africa*, meant when it talked about inculturation. These communities cannot develop without cultivating the virtues that are given to the Church through Christ’s reconciling death and resurrection. Benedict XVI captures rightly what the death of Christ should mean for Africa and indeed the rest of the world as he says “bloodshed does not cry out for revenge but begs for respect for life, for peace.”

The family communion if well harnessed can be the foundation of an African ecclesiology of unity in diversity, a place where respect for life, merciful justice, and genuine peace become urgent needs that can only be satisfied through reconciliation with God and neighbor. In this regard, Peter doesn’t need to be a Jerusalemite to be part of the family of God or in other words one does not need to be of our tribe in order to be a pastor in our local Church.

### 6.3.1 The means to Reconciliation in the Family of God

The conditions necessary for genuine reconciliation in Africa should encompass preaching the just word of God, a call to constant conversion, and authentic Christian witness.

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The word of God, the gospel of reconciliation and peace, is the source of conversion. The word of God in order to spur conversion in Africa should be preached ritually through the sacraments especially the sacraments of baptism/confirmation, Eucharist, and reconciliation because life in Africa is always a celebration. It is breathtaking to see that in most African communities, people dance during weddings, initiation ceremonies, and even during funerals. Some Africans dance at funerals because every activity for an African is taken as an opportunity to enhance abundant life. They dance to celebrate the passage of someone into the world of the “living dead” from where the support of the life of the living comes. Dance, highlights the aspect of celebration or ritualization of life in Africa. Borrowing a leaf from the African celebratory stance to life, the gospel of reconciliation and peace should be preached ritually. The preaching of this gospel will emphasize “that the sacrament of reconciliation of penitents is necessary for the deepening of the baptismal conversion. It is the grace of the Holy Spirit who, in this sacrament, brings to fruition the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Christian, who remains a sinner on this earth.”

Importantly, this sacrament gives to the participants a concrete dramatic plot to the gospel of reconciliation, merciful justice and peace inherent in the death and resurrection of Christ. In this way, ritual makes concrete the benefits of the reconciling death of Christ or it is a dramatic answer to the problem of the breakdown of relationships between God and humanity and among human beings.

6.3.2 Reconciliation at a Personal Level and the word of God

Cardinal Renato Martino in his 18th July, 2005 address on reconciliation and peace to a meeting of Church representatives from Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of

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53 François Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation*, 60
Congo presented reconciliation to Christ at three levels. Citing the letter of St. James, Martino sees that the source of war comes from an evil root within people. It is the human heart or the conscience that must be formed by the word of the gospel of reconciliation and peace to conform to Christ, who was open to the scandal of encountering “otherness.” In the context of Africa, the formation of the conscience must touch the limited perception of family so that it is broaden to include the entire human race, especially all believers despite their tribal or ethnic identity. The gospel reveals to us that sin isolates us from anyone different from us or anyone who makes us come face to face with our poverty. “The Gospel of reconciliation and peace, when it is interiorized, changes the impulses of aggression that cause us to increase conflicts, that cause us to believe that nonviolence is impractical, that cause us to think of war as a consequence that cannot be avoided.”54 This involves first and foremost “healing the inner wound that every person experiences within himself between the ideal to which he aspires and what in effect he is able to accomplish through his own choices and behavior.”55 Benedict XVI resonates with this view of conversion issuing from the preached word and baptism as he argues:

Christ calls constantly for metanoia, conversion. Christians are affected by the spirit and customs of their time and place. But by the grace of their baptism they are called to reject harmful prevailing currents and to swim against the tide. This kind of witness demands unswerving commitment in “ongoing conversion to the Father, the source of true life, who alone is capable of delivering us from evil and all temptations, and keeping us in his Spirit, in the very heart of the struggle against the forces of evil.”56

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55 Ibid.,

56 Benedict XVI, Africæ Munus, No. 32
Therefore the Gospel of reconciliation and peace announces to us that if we are able to allow the grace of Christ to form us, we can live in harmony even with all those belonging to other ethnic communities.

The first task, taking into account the context of the Church in Africa, is that of preaching the gospel of reconciliation and peace. This gospel is a hard teaching because it involves the shedding of the old self that was comfortable with people of one’s own family, clan, tribe and nation, on one hand, and on the other, putting on the new self who transcends the limited scope of family because of faith in Christ. Renato sums this up as follows:

Christian reconciliation, in fact, radically transforms our inner orientation and overcomes our self-centeredness. It is not merely the elimination of a state of guilt but a transformation, a deeply rooted reorientation, so deeply rooted that even our way of "knowing" is transformed. St. Paul sees two types of knowledge as opposed to each other, one of the flesh and the other of the spirit, one old and the other new (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16). Knowing according to the flesh cannot simply mean knowing a person in his earthly guise. Rather, it means an old, outdated way of knowing, evaluating and judging. The transformation brought about by reconciliation is the discarding of old systems of evaluation: systems based on race, connected to social or religious discrimination. The person who is reconciled no longer knows according to national or earthly categories, but according to universal categories.⁵⁷

6.3.3 Reconciliation at a Social Level and Sacraments

Some African theologians have suggested that in Africa probably the communal sacrament of reconciliation makes more sense than private reconciliation. The reason given is that in the African conception of wrongdoing, as we have already seen, focuses not on what is private, but on what diminishes the entire community’s life-force by fracturing the organic “bondedness” of the visible and invisible worlds. These theologians argue from the history of the sacrament of reconciliation which developed in three historical forms. The earliest is the canonical form which involved public confession of sins, followed by penance or a period of

⁵⁷ Cardinal Renato Martino, “Reconciliation and Peace,”
purification through fasting, prayer and abstinence, which after one to three years ended with an absolution. After the absolution the sinners were reintegrated or were reconciled to the Church. This earliest form “allowed the remission of such serious sins as homicide, apostasy, adultery, superstitious and demoniac practices, false witness, and so forth. This form of penance was severe.”\textsuperscript{58} The canonical form of penance usually took place only once in one’s entire life on the morning of the Holy Thursday or Good Friday.

The second developed in monasteries as a dispensation from public penitential practices characterizing the canonical form of penance. The monks by virtue of having entered into the monastery, a state of perpetual penitence, were dispensed from public penitential practices. This is so because a monk “having entered the monastery, or cenobium, he would have found a penitential discipline that, both in its form and content, was a great deal like that from which he had been exempted by his entry into religion.”\textsuperscript{59} When a monk sinned within the monastery he had to do acts of penance within the monastery under the authority of the abbot or a superior. This led to drawing a list of sins and their equivalent penance. The penalties ranged from isolation from the common table, social isolation where no one could speak to them, loss of a place in the choir, exclusion from the reception of communion, and severe mortification. This ended with the readmission into common table fellowship, “to the choir, and the common life of the community at the direction of the abbot.”\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} François Kabasele Lumbala, \textit{Celebrating Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation}, 59


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 124-125
Eventually what was conceived as appropriate for the monks begun to be viewed as also appropriate for the layperson. In the monastery the penitence still carried the same rigorous humiliation as the canonical one, but when this form of penitence was opened to the laity it became more mild and private. Those who had money, gold and riches would have their money do their three year penance for them in form of masses or “by giving a gift of sixty pieces of gold to the Church.” The third form grew from the thirteenth century scrupulosity for sin which incited a constant need for the opportunity for confession. The regular practice of confession of sins and absolution slowly overshadowed the humiliating practice of discussing in details the penitent’s sins and public acts of penance and purification before the absolution as it was done in earlier centuries.

Basing his argument on this historical development of the sacrament of reconciliation, Barthélemy Adoukonou argues that African societies have always sought reconciliation as a community. For this reason, it might be enriching to think of the sacrament of reconciliation in Africa through communal lens.

Because public confession is so important in Africa to the healthy reintegration into community, would we not gain a great deal by not imitating the Occident’s practice of the sacrament? This is true especially because the white world has grown more and more indifferent to it. Would it not be better, then, to incorporate African symbolism in the rite and thereby aid the restoration of the Church as a family? Adoukonou makes an important point in calling our attention to the communal aspect of sacrament of reconciliation in African worldview, since wrongdoing whether private or public endangers the life force of the entire community. Nonetheless, we need to be cautious of the

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61 Ibid., 59
62 Barthélemy Adoukonou, “La Médecine traditionnelle et la pastorale chrétienne,” Savanes et Forêts 2 (1979), 170, the translation is made by François Kabasele Lumbala.
dangers of emphasizing the African or Occident models of reconciliation in the Church to the
detriment of God’s forgiving action in Jesus which is the theological hub of the sacrament of
reconciliation. This is so because as our project has already shown that whether black, white or
yellow models of reconciliation are largely dependent on the mimesis and scapegoat mechanism.
The action of Jesus Christ shows us that humankind (sinful) is never the victim of God on
account of its sins but it is God who is the victim of humankind, God is the one who pays for
human sin. In this view, the point of reference in reconciliation is never the sinner, but the one
who forgives sin or the offended. African traditional rites of reconciliation involve the
community, public confession of wrongdoing, and reparation for the broken relationships by
openly paying for the damage although this is sometimes only symbolic. Unfortunately,
forgiveness in traditional African rites is never the center or a necessary way to reconciliation.

Inasmuch as the imposition of acts of reparation is as important in African rites of
reconciliation as the proposition of penance in sacramental reconciliation, our project finds here
an emphasis that has to be challenged by the merciful justice of God. The Church’s voice is so
important because “the notion of pardon is hardly present in our traditional rites, and so this is
the way in which Christian belief and practice effect change in ritual life of the community.”63 It
is very common to find out that the chastisements imposed on the wrongdoer in traditional
African rites of reconciliation are very severe. Lumbala gives examples of penalties given to
penitents in African rites: “take, for instance, the case of a thief who repeats his crimes and his
hands burned; or when a female adulteress is paraded nude through the village; or a sorcerer is
killed or exiled from the community.”64 Unless forgiveness becomes the defining category,

63 François Kabasele Lumbala, Celebrating Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation, 68

64 Ibid., 67
whatever African Christian rites of reconciliation we may adopt will only be a perpetuation of the African canon of scapegoats.

The gospel and its catechesis, which is preached ritually in the sacraments, should emphasize in this regard that forgiveness is the summit of God’s revelation to humanity. The revelation of God’s forgiveness should be accorded a fertile ground on which to flourish in the family.

In the first place, it is peace within the family: peace lived in harmony of relationships and communicated and transmitted by means of education. Peace, in fact, finds its fertile and irreplaceable soil in the first community into which people are placed. Then follows peace in neighborhoods and in the city: the believer, a peace-lover, should be particularly disposed to fight against anything that places peace at risk. This includes social and economic injustices; poverty, whether old or new; cultural models that degrade man and undermine fundamental human rights; armed conflicts and various manifestations of violence, which are the offspring of civil indifference and of estrangement from one's neighbor.65

It means that all those who are baptized cannot assemble around a scapegoat to pacify the community in crisis. The Church, therefore in Africa has the duty to challenge the politicians who in all subtlety use sacrifice (bloody ethnic clashes) as a way of gaining power, money, and honor. Unless the gift of God’s kenotic self-surrender is learned as a habit for every baptized person we shall continue to assemble on old terms in Africa where bloodshed and not forgiveness is the answer to the problem of sin.

6.3.4 Reconciliation with God and Authentic Christian Witness

Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians: “Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:21) cannot be emphasized enough because this is the foundation of all activities carried out in pursuit of reconciliation in human relationships. Any work for reconciliation that does not emphasize

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65 Cardinal Renato Martino, “Reconciliation and Peace,” Part 1
God’s initiative to reconcile us to God’s self, a gratuitous gift of love and mercy, will definitely end into chaos of violence and sacrifice of innocent victims, a reality already prevalent in many African nations. The Church should have the humility to proclaim, through living-in-grace as brothers and sisters, the reconciliation with God already achieved in Christ’s paschal mystery. Martino again comes alive in his remarks in Tanzania by saying:

Reconciliation "ad extra" starts first of all by making peace with God and being at peace with God, the "Absolutely Other," who in Christ has made himself closer to us than ever. This is peace with the God of the covenant and the God of peace, from whom true peace descends as a gift. Being at peace with God means living in harmony with his plan of salvation, revealed to us by the Lord Jesus and ceaselessly proclaimed and made relevant by the Church. It means recognizing God’s will, accepting his covenant, the ten great commandments, the new law, which is the Holy Spirit, and, in particular, the beatitudes that represent the frame and background of Christian law — both personal and social — and that give to this law its meaning and specific originality.

The ministry of reconciliation and the preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation in Africa must be centered on what God wants our world to look like. The best world in the plan of God revealed to us in Christ is one where people will understand and live the trinitarian self-emptying love instead of being a people that is turned in on itself because of sin.

For a balanced spirituality of communion in the Church as family of God we need both the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist. To which we dedicated the whole chapter in order to highlight the centrality of the need. The centrality of the sacrament of the Eucharist is noteworthy in the Lineamenta of the Second Special Assembly for Africa, the document points out that to be partakers of the Eucharist has great reconciliatory effects. The Eucharist makes us the same body and the same blood with Christ, on one hand, and on the other, it makes us one body with other members in the family of God in which aggression to another is aggression to our very self. The bishops say:

66 Ibid., Part 1
In the present state of socio-political and economic life on the African continent, what can be more dramatic than witnessing the often-bloody struggle for life and survival? How can the First Special Assembly for Africa (1994) which emphasized the Church-Family of God, contribute to the reconstruction of an Africa which is thirsting for reconciliation and seeking justice and peace? The ethnic and regional wars, the massacres and genocides which have free reign over the continent should cry out to us in a very special way. If belonging to Jesus Christ makes us members of the same family, sharers of the same Word of Life and partakers of the same Bread of Life, and if sharing the Blood of Christ makes us sharers in the same life, because the same Blood of Christ circulates in our veins and makes us children of God, members of the Family of God, then hatred, injustice and fratricidal wars should cease. Thus, the need arises to deepen and incarnate the mystery of Church-Family in everyday life.57

It is for this that the Church must strengthen catechesis not only for the preparation for the first communion, but catechesis which will foster the communal bond of life and love in every eucharistic assembly. This catechesis should inspire Christians, all those who share in the Eucharist of Christ, on the road of conversion to the gospel of reconciliation, justice, and peace.

It is from the small entities like the eucharistic assembly that Christians should challenge themselves with the gospel of reconciliation, justice, and peace. For it is “in the local Churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for the necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in [African] society and culture.”68 We can achieve this more effectively through building the spirituality of communion, reconciliation and peace starting from the smallest entities of the local Church and then move to the national and regional churches.

In many of African dioceses (local Church), parishes are made up of or divided into Small Christian Communities (SCC) or Basic Christian Communities; prayer centers

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57 Lineamenta, The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation Justice and Peace, No. 36
68 Benedict XVI, Africae Munus, No. 14
(Eucharistic assemblies); outstations (sub-parishes); and parish respectively. Catechesis of reconciliation would be more effective in SCC where a group ten to twenty people meet in family houses for prayer and sharing the word of God. It is to this small group that God’s reconciling justice should be announced and lived before it is lived at the level of the National Episcopal conference. The communion and the ability to forgive each other in these basic communities will certainly have impact on the other larger gatherings of people in the local church. The message should be reconciliation with God and with one another in the SCC, despite the fact that these communities may be made up of people of different families and clans. Unless ethnocentrism is disproved at the level of the basic community it will be “easier to follow (or worship) this idol, or to absolutize African culture, than to follow the demands of Christ.”

69 Authentic African Christian life should involve “forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct.”

70 The propositions of the second Synod proposed national and continental celebrations of reconciliation and continental eucharistic congresses, which will have the goal of inciting continental conversion and reconciliation with and in Christ. Inasmuch as this is important, we argue that these events will be effective only if they will have a foundation in the SCC, eucharistic assemblies, sub-parishes, and dioceses respectively.

The same parameters we are suggesting also apply to reconciliation between the bishop of a diocese, his priest and the lay faithful. Benedict XVI, like the Instrumentum Laboris of the second Synod for Africa, decries the presence of situations in African dioceses that some pastors

69 Ibid., No. 102

70 Ibid., No. 22
are refused in a diocese or a parish because they do not belong ethnically to a particular territory where their competent services are needed:

Particular Churches are asking the synod fathers to help the Church in Africa better communicate her prophetic message, allowing her to speak authoritatively to political leaders. Her message will not be effective, unless she fosters unity among her own members and resolves any conflicting signs in her life of witness. In this regard, divisions based on ethnic, tribal, regional or national lines and a xenophobic mentality have been observed in some ecclesial communities and in the words and attitudes of some Pastors.\(^{71}\)

The *Lineamenta* repeats the same point by showing that there is sometimes strife between bishops and their presbyterate and a tendency of some bishops in national episcopal conferences to take positions favoring specific political parties. As a result, these episcopal conferences are no longer able to speak with one voice in an appeal for unity. All this is meant to emphasize the need for the Church’s self-critique from its basic entity to the diocesan level, national episcopal conferences, and to the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). The first target of the message of reconciliation is all the baptized, those already evangelized, and those already in the Church before it becomes the message for the secular community.

### 6.4 RECONCILIATION AND MEDIATION

Since our project has made central the role of imitation and mediation in human relationships it is necessary to point out that the Church in Africa can be an ambassador of reconciliation only if its members live this message. We came to conclusions that the only mediator that must be imitated in our quest for reconciliation, justice and peace is Jesus Christ, who shows us the right way by his life and paschal mystery how to relate to one another.

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\(^{71}\) Second Synod for Africa, *Intrumentum Laboris*, No. 53
However, we need in our midst examples of people who have embodied Christ’s self-surrendering love, who show by their actions in our Church and society that it is possible to live like new creatures because of the knowledge revealed to them by Christ. Secondly we also acknowledge the importance of the family in the work of creating communities of reconciliation, justice and peace. Our interest in the family turns our gaze to the role of women in African society when it comes to the establishment of peace in the community. The route toward reconciliation, justice and peace that we propose for African Christianity is one that takes seriously the roles of imitation and mediation, but also argues that these two themes should be enlightened by the word of God, conversion to Christ, and authentic Christian witness of life.

6.4.1 Religious orders in Mediation

It is not by any means to downplay the importance that Vatican II accorded to the lay Christians that we propose religious orders as having a special witnessing role for the reconciliation of the Church-family in Africa. Through their presence, service, example of charity and discipleship they can be mediators of reconciliation in Africa. The simple reason is that it is evident that many religious orders in Africa are a communion in and with Christ, a place where people of different races, people from varied African ethnic groups, people of diverse capacities and worldviews live together and share their life because of their charisms which spring from faith in Jesus Christ. The charism and faith in Christ confront issues like the fear of the other different from us, the fear to give up the language we are so familiar with, eating habits, fear of letting go of the security of the familiar and encourage venturing into the unknown, into the world of the other. Religious orders are a clear challenge to the Church of Africa that despite living in a divided world people can live in peace with each other as disciples of Christ.
Religious orders make concrete the notion of a family since, like in the family, its members do not choose each other, but are brought together and united by the chords of the trinitarian love.

Benedict XVI argues that religious orders do not only witness to the unity of their members in a divided world, but most of all they are a prophetic response to the needs of humanity so dissatisfied with its existence in the context of division.

Through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, the life of consecrated persons becomes a prophetic witness. Hence they can be examples in the area of reconciliation, justice and peace, even in circumstances marked by great tension. Community life shows us that it is possible to live as brothers and sisters, and to be united even when coming from different ethnic or racial backgrounds (cf. Ps 133:1). It can and must enable people to see and believe that today in Africa, those men and women who follow Christ Jesus find in him the secret of living happily together: mutual love and fraternal communion, strengthened daily by the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.72

Although in some communities you can find divisions emanating from ethnic affiliations, religious orders still stand for Africa as a prophetic witness to reconciliation, justice and peace. This is a gift that dioceses, the diocesan clergy and the lay faithful should use to the advantage of Church and social reconciliation. They should use the religious priests, sisters and brothers as mediators in processes of reconciliation because of their apparent witness of community life.

6.3.1 Women in Mediation

Apart from proposing men and women in religious orders to be mediators in the processes of reconciliation, we believe that another Christian branch that can be so effective in mediation is that of women. Women can contribute to peace and reconciliation in two very important ways. The first is that as African mothers they are bearers of life in a society that so much values life: “Women act as role models for their children and contribute significantly in

72 Benedict XVI, *Africæ Munus*, No. 117
shaping the minds and attitudes within the family nucleus. Women are motivated to protect their children and ensure security for their families. Despite — or because of — the harsh experiences of so many who survive violent conflict, women generally refuse to give up the pursuit of peace.”

There is no section of the society that feels the pain of the loss of life in African society more than the women. The functions women have in reconciliation processes are complex, reflecting the multiple roles women have in society as mothers.

Theologically, women would be more effective as mediators of reconciliation, as John Paul II puts it, because “the moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human being to her in a special way. Of course, God entrusts every human being to each and every other human being. But this entrusting concerns women in a special way - precisely by reason of their femininity - and this in a particular way determines their vocation.” Pointedly, God entrusted his only Son to a woman, Mary, so that through her Son all the nations may respond to God’s plan of love. Women, by being mothers, have the unique ability to cut across borders and to unify communities because of their motherly love that cannot indure seeing one of their children suffering. They can act as bridge builders and have the ability to ease internal divides, just like most of the women do in individual families. Bernadette Ndunguru in her presentation to the 16th Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Plenary Assembly on the role of women in peace-building is right to argue that women are the first teachers of peace:

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They have great influence in the home, as mothers they have a kind of "moral authority" and are responsible for educating and passing on values. As the first agents of socialization, women are natural teachers for peace education to their children. In playing their roles as parents, service providers, teachers, they are ideal for instilling into their children values such as: Respect for others; the peaceful solution to conflicts and problems; sharing; partnerships; tolerance; sense of justice; equity; etc. all of which are qualities of sustainable peace. A woman is the epitome of peace.

Ndunguru continues to argue that “they have an innovative way to coop problems and support each other. Engaging women into the national reconciliation process can therefore have ripple effects thus affecting the reconciliation process most positively and investing the entire society with invaluable social benefits.” Their contribution would be more powerful if all their involvement is ignited by the love of Christ the reconciler of humans to God and humans beings to one another.

Secondly, women in Africa have the capacity to tell stories of their community life, experiences and expectations. Instead of being discursive and seeking positions like men, most of the women in Africa are narrative, which gives them the ability to feel the painful experiences of others, in such a way taking in the pain of the other as their own like in Christ’s Admirabile Commercium.

Women have the ability to give grief a public expression. The role of grief, of coping with personal and others’ losses, is intrinsic to reconciliation. A sincere understanding of the other only comes with a willingness to understand pain, to accept, to confess and forgive. As one old woman once noted: “a woman does not belong to any particular family or tribe. She has no boundaries and, therefore, she is there to unite families because she is neutral.”

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75 Bernadette Ndunguru, “The Role of Women in Peace-building and Reconciliation in the AMECEA Countries,” in African Ecclesial Review, 51 No. 3 (Summer 2009), 284

76 Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKISS)

77 Bernadette Ndunguru, “The Role of Women in Peace-building and Reconciliation in the AMECEA Countries,” 285
The women connect easily with other people suffering from the adverse consequences of conflict, because they see a son or a daughter in the victim of gender discrimination, victims of domestic violence and abuse, those who suffer from conflict-related trauma, in those children and women who have to change their roles to become bread winners of the family because of the dictatorship of violence and conflict. It is to the characteristic of women to connect with the suffering of others, typical to motherhood, that our project highlights the importance of Christian women in Africa to act as mediators in the processes reconciliation and peace.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reiterated the bishop’s theological naming of the Church-as-Family of God, based on the mystery of the Trinity, as necessary for Africa because it emphasizes the importance of relationships. It means the situation of conflicts, wars, ethnic clashes and violence in Africa, a clear manifestation of the mystery of sin, cannot be overcome without reference to the loving relationship in the Trinity and God’s covenantal relationship with humanity. Reconciliation in Africa will mean taking seriously God’s self-surrender in Christ as the paradigm for renewing human relationships because it entails God’s faithfulness to the covenant whatever the response of the human partner may be.

The most urgent mission of the Church in the African context, a theater of violence, armed struggle, bloodshed, and ethnic clashes, must be a battle against the forces of the culture of death in order to establish a culture of life, love, unity and peace. “Africa needs a Church; Africa needs a spirituality which enables and empowers Africans to live a life of ‘shalom’ – total well-being in their multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-political – economic
Thus, evangelization of Africa should be directed to the formation of Christians who see ethnic plurality as a gift of the Holy Trinity and not a curtailment of unity and peace. In this way, the nature and mission of the Church should inspire unity and promote life instead of division and death.

Secondly, taking seriously the African worldview where wrongdoing, however private it may be, is conceived as having universal repercussions, communal reconciliation is necessary. In this communal reconciliation, forgiveness and not punishment should be the driving force of the process because Christ has revealed to us that this is the only way to genuine reconciliation and peace. This requires conversion from acting ordinarily as all human communities have acted throughout history by being on the side of the crowd or the victimizers. Christians are supposed to stand on the side of the victim and plead the victims cause. However forgiveness assures us that this stance does not benefit the victim at the detriment of the crowd, but it unveils that reconciliation is the healing of both, so that they may be united in one community of life and love.

Finally, since the process of conversion and reconciliation takes place in the midst of the community, it is of great importance to have mediators. We find mediation as a very necessary component of the processes of reconciliation because imitation is central to human relationships. Reconciliation processes will always need mediators to be living witnesses to the just word of God, mediators who can really be “the salt of the earth… and the light of the world (Mt 15:13-14). Despite many other groups of witnesses that can be enrolled as mediators of reconciliation in the Church of Africa, we have taken interest in the roles of the religious orders because of the

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witness of community life, which is supported by their faithfulness to vows and communal prayer. They are a sign to a divided world that Jesus Christ is our peace and by our faith in him we do not need to resemble each other in order to live together as brothers and sisters. Another body we saw as very important in the work of mediation is that of Christian women because it is to them that we should owe peaceful families, churches and nations. Ordinarily, it is to women that God has entrusted a human being, such that when this human being suffers or loses his/her life through violence and all structural and cultural sinful practices it is women who give grief the public expression. The women resonate easily with all those who suffer the consequences of human scapegoat mechanism such that they would be very resourceful mediators of peace.

The theological naming of the Church in Africa as a **Family of God** makes the mission of reconciliation an urgent one, to bring together for God his children who have been divided negatively into tribes, ethnic groups, and religious groups through the powers of sin and death. As a Family of God all Christians have to be ambassadors of reconciliation as though Christ was making an appeal through them; “be reconciled with God and with one another” (2 Cor. 5:20). This urgent mission is possible for the Church because it is God’s own mission in Christ Jesus through the Spirit. Its urgency lies in looking at the number of people we have lost through conflict, a number of those who have been impoverished, and those whose life has be twisted forever. In this regard reconciliation is not only an agreement, a consensus or the resolution of a problem or dispute and the elimination of animosity or an end to violence, but a proclamation by word and witness of life the Good News of Jesus Christ, crucified, died and raised for our union with God and with one another.
7.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The theology of reconciliation in a world immersed in a culture of violence and death we developed in this project takes seriously the drama of human relationships in the world. It is clear that through imitation, the root of our hominization, every human being is confronted with the mystery of sin pervading our relationships with one another. It is for this that mediation has been a central feature of this dissertation. The greatest problem raised in this work is the presence of perennial violence. Evidently, perennial violence issues from the imitation of wrong and sinful models, and the presence of the condition of sin permeating our cultural worldviews which blinds us from seeing violent dynamics inherent in the social bodies that form us collectively and individually. One example of violent dynamics in cultural worldviews given in this work is the limited conception of family in African mentality where violence against those of other tribes metamorphoses into good violence to protect one’s family life force. Unfortunately, if we are formed by the violent “other” there is only one way of living in the world with others, i.e., violently. Unless another model presents to us a non-violent way of existing we will not know the other way of relating except violently. We have argued that the imitation of the communion, self-emptying and self-surrendering in love of the trinitarian persons to each other (which is the basis of the incarnation, the selfless life of Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry, and the crucifixion) is the central model towards correcting all forms of self-seeking imitations apparent in our world. This is so because the one in whose life we seek to participate or imitate (the triune God) is also the one who gratuitously gives as the strength to be able to participate in it.

Having presented that humanity since the foundation of the world has lived on the interface of reprisal and counter-reprisal which finds its pacifying locus in sacrifice we need another model that will make our relationships peaceful, since it is clear that we cannot live
without models. We need models that will show us that the violent sacrifice of human beings in order to achieve peaceful coexistence is a lie from Satan that has kept our world in a situation of relentless violence and death. Christianity, following Christ, presents to us the truth that peace after conflict is never achieved by sacrifice but by self-emptying and loving surrender of one human being to another in an act of forgiveness which changes the situation of enmity into loving friendship. Therefore reconciliation as a human imitation and participation in the life of a triune God (a consequence of grace) is rightly conceived as a contagion of the self-emptying love (agape) of God which should be spread through human self-empting to one another in the world. In this case, reconciliation is therefore a divine-human kenotic event that changes enmity into friendship between God and creation, and among humanity.

It is for this that we have grounded our theology of reconciliation in the Father’s gratuitous work of reconciling the world to himself and thus making peace with the whole world through the blood of the Cross. The journey of the Son in the flesh and his death has freed us from the slavery of sin and death by calling us to new life. This life calls us to abandon sin and most of all it opens us to welcome those who are sinners even if they be our enemies. This presupposes the necessity of the power of the grace of forgiveness in every process of reconciliation for this is what Jesus proclaimed at the Last Supper. In the midst of betrayal and imminent passion, Jesus instituted the Eucharist as a New Covenant in his blood for the forgiveness of sins. Moreover reconciliation as the work of the Father and the Son through whom it is done is only fulfilled by the Holy Spirit in history. It is interesting to hear Peter on the day of Pentecost exhorting people to repentance and forgiveness of sins through baptism in these words: “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Sacraments therefore are the place where the grace of Christ’s reconciling
work is appropriated by the working of the Holy Spirit and lived out as a pledge for our ministry of reconciliation in the world.

Turning our attention to Africa, where the Church is conceived as a family of God we have argued for the governing priority of the family: an image of the Trinity. We proposed that in this family of God: reconciliation, forgiveness and peace should be cultivated as Christian virtues without which there is no Church-family at all. The traditional African family bondedness should enrich and be enriched by a Christian worldview of family which includes people of all tribes and races. The Church-as-family of God in Africa will include people of other tribes as fellow siblings in a family where they compete with each other only in showing love. It is for this that we suggested religious orders as witnesses for an African Church family. Thus, religious orders can serve as mediators in the processes of reconciliation because of their witness to community life, fraternity and sisterly love; like in a family they do not choose each other but once put together they become fellow siblings.

Secondly, we also need women as mediators of reconciliation because of their ability to connect with those who suffer violence; give grief a public expression; being first teachers of peace in the family; and more importantly for their role as bearers of life. This brings us to the greatest challenge for the Church of Africa in relation to reconciliation. This family of God, as community of reconciled and reconciling people, if it wants to be effective in reconciliation it should address the problem of the limited family worldview to give it a more inclusive feature which will cross over the boundaries that divide us adversity between tribes, ethnic communities and races. In this way, the episcopal conferences will not remain silent when violence is suggested in any section because of their belonging and being leaders on Christ’s command to the eucharistic assemblies: a responsibility which transcends familial, tribal and racial loyalties.
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