Receive your own mystery and become what you receive: the Eucharist as a source of reconciliation, justice and peace in conflicting Sub-Saharan Africa

Author: Felix Mabvuto Phiri

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/1855

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC, Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2009

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.
RECEIVE YOUR OWN MYSTERY AND BECOME WHAT YOU RECEIVE: THE EUCHARIST AS A SOURCE OF RECONCILIATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE IN CONFLICTING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A Thesis Written and Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the S.T.L. Degree Of Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry

Written by: FELIX MABVUTO PHIRI, SMM
Directed by: Professor JOHN BALDOVIN, SJ
Second Reader: Professor KHALED ANATOLIOS

December, 2009
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENT.................................................................................................................PAGE

0.0 INTRODUCTION...............................................................................................1
1.0 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT OF MISSION IN AFRICA...............4
  1.1 Statistics of refugees, internally displaced, deaths from war and ethnic violence....5
  1.2 Ethnic/Tribal conflicts in Ecclesial Pronouncements......................................5
  1.3 Reasons given by the Church as causes of the situation.................................9
  1.4 Anthropological causes................................................................................10
2.0 SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN WHICH SIN EXISTS............................................11
  2.1 Participation in existing sinful structures.......................................................11
3.0 AFRICA VIEWED IN THE LENSES OF NATURAL SCIENCES....................13
  3.1 Gregory Baum and social sin........................................................................13
    3.1.1 Injustices and dehumanizing trends built in ethnocentrism/tribalism........14
    3.1.2 Cultural and religious symbols..............................................................16
    3.1.3 False consciousness created by institutions............................................18
    3.1.4 Collective decisions generated by distorted consciousness....................18
  3.2 Bernard Lonergan and bias..........................................................................20
    3.2.1 Group Bias............................................................................................21
    3.2.2 General Bias.........................................................................................22
4.0 THE MODEL OF MISSION SINCE VATICAN II..............................................23
  4.1 Incarnation, Accompaniment and Solidarity...................................................24
  4.2 St. Paul and reconciliation.............................................................................26
  4.3 Reconciliation and forgiveness as urgent needs for the Church of Africa..........30
5.0 CONCLUSION...............................................................................................31

CHAPTER TWO

1.0 THE TRINITARIAN COMMUNION AS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THAT IS...33
  1.1 God does not exist in isolation......................................................................34
  1.2 God as relationship which respects distinction............................................39
  1.3 Eucharist as communion with the corporate personality of Christ................42
2.0 PRACTICAL IMPLICATION FOR ZIZIOULAS’ THOUGHT...............................48
  2.1 Eucharistic community as a place of reconciliation.....................................48
  2.2 Eucharistic community as a place of forgiveness, justice and peace.............51
  2.3 Peace as mutual embrace..........................................................................56
3.0 CONCLUSION...............................................................................................60

CHAPTER THREE

1.0 ST. AUGUSTINE’ EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY..................................................65
2.0 CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE..............................................................................69
  2.1 Gift-Sacrifices.............................................................................................70
  2.2 Communion-Sacrifices...............................................................................71
  2.3 Sin-Offerings.............................................................................................71
  2.4 Passover.....................................................................................................72
3.0 REAL PRESENCE..........................................................................................74
4.0 EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN AFRICA
   4.1 Offerings for sin
   4.2 Offerings as a means of fellowship with God and with one another
   4.3 Offerings as gift of thanksgiving

5.0 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNION IN AFRICAN WORSHIP

6.0 EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE THAT MAKES CHRIST PRESENT

7.0 REAL PRESENCE, A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE IN AFRICA
   7.1 A transforming presence
   7.2 A presence that makes for unity and peace
   7.3 The kiss of Peace
   7.4 Receive your own mystery and become what you receive

8.0 CONCLUSION

9.0 GENERAL CONCLUDING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

10.0 CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the academic community of Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry, especially to the dean for making it a community of learning, ministry and friendship. I am also deeply indebted to professors whose outstanding teaching gave birth to this thesis which is a fruit of their inspiration.

I extend my sincere thanks to Weston Jesuit Community for their hospitality for it was while in their community that this thesis took its shape. I register my special thanks to Rev. Fr. Bradley Schaeffer, SJ for his incredible generosity, hospitality and fraternity. My deep gratitude also goes to the members of Feber house and Fr. William Mulligan, SJ for proof reading this work. I express my thanks to the Pastor of St. Catherine of Genoa, Fr. Brian McHugh and all the priests living in the rectory for their unfathomable friendship and encouragement while I was writing.

I cannot thank worthily the office of the President of Boston College for sponsoring my studies in collaboration with my community the Missionaries of the Company of Mary (SMM). My sincere thanks also go to the American Province of the Montfort Missionaries for their fraternity, companionship and encouragement. Lastly, but not least, it would have been impossible to complete this work without the excellent expertise of professors John Baldovin and Khaled Anatolios who directed and read the work, may they continue to be fruitful in their ministry.
0. INTRODUCTION

The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity.¹

Twentieth century is an epoch that has known the ravages of war, violence, oppression, exploitation and conflict. In a century marked by great human brokenness which has escalated the alienation from God, from one another and from the whole of creation; what would be the proper mission of the Church in such a context? This breakdown of the whole human family which has led to great suffering stares us in the face. It has been an epoch with two world wars, genocides, nature’s rebellion as the weather and atmospheric conditions have been unpredictable and above all that world development has taken place on the heads of billions of people who live in abject poverty. In a world torn apart by conflicts and division, reconciliation becomes a necessary theological theme for mission, if we are to work for a better future for "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Our thesis, “Receive your own mystery and become what you receive” is an invitation to Christians who partake of the Eucharist to be changed into the very life of Jesus Christ who is inseparable from the Father and the Holy Spirit. Eucharistic communion is not only a sign of the reconciled life of the trinitarian communion but the Eucharist also makes that trinitarian communion present in the lives of the people. The Eucharist as a sacrament of communion in the Trinity offers us a strong foundation on which to build and fulfill Africa’s insatiable need for reconciliation, justice and peace. Reconciliation is about the restoration of justice, the renewal of relationships, and the transformation of the whole human society into the presence of the

¹ Gaudium et Spes: in Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents, Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations, Austin Flannery (ed), (Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1996), No. 1
kingdom of God in history. Our work will draw from the Eucharistic and trinitarian mysteries to show that human life is about a relationship of communion with God, with fellow human beings and with creation.

The method used in this thesis heavily leans on Joe Holland and Peter Henriot’s work “Social Analysis,” though not strictly following it. It progresses into four steps: 1) Insertion, which locates the geography of our pastoral responses in lived experiences of individuals and communities. 2) Social Analysis, examines causes, probes consequences, delineates linkages, and identifies actors. 3) Theological Reflection, an effort to understand broadly and deeply the analyzed experience in the light of living faith, scripture, Church’s social teaching, and the sources of tradition. 4) Pastoral Action, what response is called for by the individual and the community? This work is divided into three chapters. The first is an insertion into Sub-Saharan Africa’s reality followed by a social cultural analysis. The tools used in this section are mostly the ecclesial pronouncements of the Pope and the bishops of Africa. The second chapter will be more a theological reflection on the life of the Trinity; a relationship of persons in love, different and yet not divided. The main proponent will be John Zizioulas. The theological reflection will continue with the insight which prompted this thesis from St. Augustine of Hippo that to receive the Eucharist calls for a transformation into Christ who is received, and thereafter become what Christ is to the world, a source of reconciliation. Lastly, we will suggest strategies for the mission of the Church in Africa today where reconciliation through justice and peace is a non-negotiable mode of mission. Our focus will be on Sub-Saharan Africa but most often reference will be made in the context of Africa in general as a continent in need of reconciliation. For what affects Sub-Saharan Africa affects the whole continent.

---

2 Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, Social Analysis: Linking Faith with Justice, (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1990), 1-15
Chapter one

In this chapter we will be looking at the concrete situation of Sub-Saharan Africa today especially its social and structural disorientation as expressed by ecclesial pronouncements and look for reasons which may have triggered all of this. In every culture, society, and ethnic/tribal groups there are symbols, myths, images and stories which form the entire mentality of a people. We cannot think of a social culture that is not formed by these elements. Their influence has a direct consequence on individuals in the society. If the symbols, images, myths and stories are sinful, the society is sick and its culture decadent. Conversely, “if symbols and myths are honest and beautiful, a society’s culture enriches and dignifies people’s experience. What happens to people in any society is inseparable from the symbol systems that permeate that society’s culture.”

In the following lines we will be evaluating causes of ethnic conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa and pointing out that the urgent mission of the Church in Africa today should that of reconciliation, justice and peace. It is very clear that in many part of Africa especially south of the Sahara there are many conflicts and division based on ethnicity, religion and politics. Despite many attempts to help conflicting communities to reconcile, the processes of reconciliation are so slow that at times reconciliation does not take place at all. It is for this reason that we will be trying to answer the question why reconciliation is so slow and sometimes even impossible. To answer this question it is important to realize that in dealing with conflicts we are actually dealing with sin. At the heart of it all is the quality of relationship between Humans and God; people who are not at peace with God surely cannot be at peace with one another. We must view sin as a pervading alienation from God and from one another. This

3 Bernard Cooke, Sacraments and Sacramentality, (Mystic: CT, Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 203
alienation represents not merely the performance of single sinful acts but rather a continuous state of mind created by symbols and myths in a social order which play a big part in individual decisions. Therefore, the Church’s mission of reconciliation must take into consideration the pervading social structures in which sin exists, but also recognize the presence of grace and so try to employ graceful ways of fostering reconciliation, justice and peace.

Secondly, we will employ Gregory Baum’s insight as he reads classical sociology through the lenses of theology and Bernard Lonergan’s notion of ‘bias’ as the source of decline in the social situation of Sub-Saharan Africa. This chapter will end with reconciliation as understood by St. Paul as a way to enter into communion with God, with one another and the entire creation from where the second chapter will develop.

1.0 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT OF MISSION IN AFRICA

In general the mission of the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa has taken root amidst different circumstances; in some countries the mission has been greeted with peace while in others and this is in many countries; with violence, wars, poverty, tribalism and other forms of injustices. This situation has left many people dead and many more displaced. Statistics generated by United Nations bodies and reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre has the following indicators of 2009 of the people internally displaced and refuges in 11 countries of Africa south of the Sahara. On the other hand, we also have those who have died in war and other war related causes, in ethnic and electoral violence. Since some countries have come out of war, violence and killing, the reality is a mixture of pain, guilt, shame and regret for what took place. People cannot face each other with all the harm done to others; it is for this that the mission of reconciliation is needed urgently. These situations painfully inspire in our minds the question as to what has gone wrong and what must be the mission of the Church in a milieu like
this. We suggest reconciliation centered on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Eucharist as a way to make people understand that violence against others is actually violence to their own selves.

1.1 Statistics of refugees, internally displaced, and deaths from war and ethnic violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Intern/displaced</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>War/Eth.violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>396,541</td>
<td>210,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>179,940</td>
<td>36,300</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cent. Africa Rep.</td>
<td>212,000</td>
<td>71,685</td>
<td>???</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. R. Congo</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
<td>401,914</td>
<td>5,950,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>193,700</td>
<td>???</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>???</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>413,000</td>
<td>5,356</td>
<td>1,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>???</td>
<td>92,966</td>
<td>1,000,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>700,000</td>
<td>464,253</td>
<td>10,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>4,703,163</td>
<td>686,311</td>
<td>2,000,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1,310,000</td>
<td>21,752</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Ethnic/Tribal conflicts in ecclesial pronouncements

4 With 1,364 deaths recorded only from January-October, 2009. These records are based on Statistics generated by United Nations bodies and reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>
5 Today’s estimates of deaths in Burundi massacres hover around 800,000 to 2,100,000
6 These were killed in the 1982 war only
7 With 1,364 deaths recorded only from January-October, 2009. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>
8 More than 2000 people have been killed in Darfur region only from January 2009 to September 2009
9 There is an average 146 people killed per week in northern Uganda
In his Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, John Paul II begins by outlining the history of African evangelization in a very positive way, with the Good News taking its root among many African people. In chapter II, he outlines many positive values upheld by many African cultures; values like solidarity, hospitality, family and respect for life, values which directed the lives of many African saints he mentions in this section. However, when he enters into the second section he starts it with a question: “What has become of Africa?” Having received the Good News, Africa was supposed to live the gospel values, complemented by their own values. Africa was supposed to enjoy the values of hope, joy, harmony, love, unity and peace. Instead of all these values the opposite is true: poverty, thievery, disunity, and social decadence. John Paul II states:

> After correctly noting that Africa is a huge continent where very diverse situations are found, and that it is necessary to avoid generalization both in evaluating problems and suggesting solutions, the synodal assembly sadly had to say: one common situation, without any doubt, is that Africa is full of problems. In almost all our nations, there is abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The results stare us in the face: misery, wars, despair. In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected.\(^\text{10}\)

In other places he has also rightly noted that, within the borders left behind by the colonial powers, the co-existence of ethnic groups with different traditions, languages, and even religions often meets obstacles arising from serious mutual hostility. "Tribal oppositions at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of Pastors from other ethnic groups."\(^\text{11}\) He sadly acknowledges that the greatest problem which is eating up most of African countries is tribal/ethnic conflict based on differences in their view of reality. There are two major elements you will find coming up in different forms; the foreign influence ranging from the partition of


\(^{11}\) Ibid., No. 49
Africa to economic policies and the tribal/ethnic hostilities. John Paul II compares Africa to a man 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.”

On the other hand, we have the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) bishops’ propositions of 2001 plenary assembly stating that ethnic and tribal differences have led to wars between communities. They also point to the negative contribution of foreign powers which until today are still responsible for instigation of wars, citing Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo as typical examples. The bishops called these conflicts ‘wars by proxy.’ The SECAM also noted that:

Africa is faced with excess of conflicts, whose immediate effects are hate and division, rancor and revenge, a turning to force, violence and war... All this notwithstanding, there are unfortunately so many disheartening abnormalities of such huge gravity and horror in our lives as citizens and believers, that need to be condemned outright as a blatant negation of all that the kingdom of God stands for. We decry the many acts of injustice, exploitation and violence that continue relentlessly to degrade human beings created in the image and likeness of God. Hostilities and conflicts within and between clans, village communities, ethnic groups, nations and religions have assumed a frighteningly horrifying dimension all over Africa. The fact that these are by no means new evils in Africa makes the work of the Church even more difficult and urgent.

When they speak about the rich nations they are so blatant in denouncing the evils perpetrated in many African countries. Pointing to slavery as an evil that has left an indelible mark on the esteem of many Africans, arms trade, and plunder of African raw materials for their selfish ends, and the marking of borders. “The colonial nations are surely aware that some of the internal

---

12 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 41
13 SECAM, *Christ Our Peace: Church as Family of God, Place and Sacrament of Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Peace in Africa*, The 12th Plenary Assembly, held in Rome from 30th Sept - 9th Oct, 2000, No. 5
conflicts that some African nations experience are due to the incredibly unrealistic boundaries they established in their colonies. In some cases they split ethnic groups by the stroke of the pen.”

When we turn to the 2006 Lineamenta for the second synod for Africa it is so vivid that stress has been laid on the poor performance of governments in different countries which try to continue with the model of governance left behind by the colonial masters. When these governments fail to lead the country they resort to violence, and desire to eliminate all who pose to be threats in their craving for power. The elimination processes require arms which they get from rich nations at the expense of the masses going on empty stomachs and poverty. “This is a glaring sign of the failure of politics in Africa, which are in service no longer to building the polis (city) and the search for the common good, but rather to eliminating political adversaries and the city itself.” Here it would be very important to make a long quotation from the Lineamenta No. 11 in order to see the difficulty that the bishops are facing. Instead of confronting directly the issues of tribalism versus nationalism both in the lineamenta and the plenary assembly they decided to take the bull by the horns as they turn to the question of artificial colonial borders as what has aggravated this situation.

One of the major challenges in Africa today is the lack of success of most post-colonial States on the continent. It would be overly simplistic to attribute the cause of this failure in African political life to the multi-ethnic composition of States or the artificial borders from colonial times. Beyond ethnic differences and rivalries, Africans have a sense of nationalism; otherwise, their sense of belonging to a country with a history could not be explained. The question must be raised: How can pluralism be transformed into a positive, constructive factor and not one which leads to division and destruction? Likewise, with regard to artificial borders, will new "natural" borders not create more problems? Where would such "natural", non-arbitrary, or better still, non-ideological borders be drawn? Who would be the impartial arbiter acceptable to everyone? Isn’t it necessary to follow the wisdom of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity who

---

14 Ibid., No. 21
15 Synod of Bishops, II Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, Lineamenta, Vatican city, 2006, No. 17
chose in 1963 not to put in question the existing borders? The challenge will probably be met on the part of good governance and the formation of a political class capable of taking the best from the ancestral traditions in Africa and integrating them with the principles for the governance of modern societies. Having said this, we do not underestimate the fact that ethnic pluralism is often the cause of tensions within States in Africa, that those who govern in many countries on the continent lose their legitimacy in the eyes of the people who put into question the usefulness of the State or that those who are supposed to be faithfully serving the State are actually destroying it.\(^\text{16}\)

We find in this quotation very relevant questions but to which no careful analysis is given so as to establish the problems that have led to the failure of most of modern African national-states. The question that can be asked is; is it not the mixing of the traditional way of governance and the colonial way that has created these hybrid structures of governments? It is clear that tribalism has been severely condemned but its foundation is never questioned, unless this is done we risk failing in our pursuit for reconciliation.

### 1.3 Reasons given by the Church as causes of the situation

Reading the pronouncements of different Episcopal Conferences, Apostolic Exhortation, SECAM and other ecclesial pronouncements, we accept the conclusion which the pope reached that all these forms of violence, wars, and poverty are perpetrated by attitudes linked to ethnocentrism and tribalism on one hand and on the other we have the colonial masters’ influence. The scenario is that all who are beneficiaries of these situations find ethnic and tribal differences the best instrument for perpetrating their sinful agendas. Africa is a theater of ethnic and religious conflicts.

However, in all the documents emphasis has been laid on the colonial period and the by-product of the colonial regimes. Cyril Orji evaluating most of these ecclesial pronouncements comes to a conclusion that points to two major issues that the Church sees as causes of this anthropological suffering going on in Africa, one remote and the other immediate.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., No. 11
the remote cause of conflict goes back to the historical foundations of the different countries in Africa, i.e. the colonial period, when the colonial rulers, in the aftermath of the 1884 Berlin Conference, in the scramble for partition and struggle for Africa, heaped together various people in a given geographical region to constitute a nation, without any regard for their ethnic make-up or composition. The immediate cause is a by-product of colonial regime, whereby politicians and military rulers manipulated the ethnic and religious differences in their respective countries to foster their selfish political and economic ends.\footnote{Cyril Orji, \textit{Ethnic and Religious in Africa: Analysis of Bias, Decline and Conversion Based on the works of Bernard Lonergan}, (Milwaukee: Wisconsin, Marquette University Press, 2008), 48}

Inasmuch as John Paul II, the bishops and other ecclesial bodies have highlighted these two causes of conflict, they are just remote causes which do not tackle the real question of the immanent social participation into sinful social structures. These two reasons are an outside manifestation of a pervading alienation from God and human beings. They represent not merely the performance of the individual acts but a mind-set from where all these social evils are born.

\textbf{1.4 Anthropological causes}

A theologian like Piet Schoonenberg addressing the question of sin from a biblical perspective tried to retrieve from it both the individual and social aspect of sin as it is presented in scriptures. He began to view sin not only as a pervading alienation from God and creatures represented by merely the performance of single or individual acts, but that human beings are ‘situated’ in the context of a sinful world. Schoonenberg uses an exegesis of the scriptural phrase; “the sin of the world”\footnote{Piet Schoonenberg, \textit{Man and Sin: A Theological View}, tr. Joseph Donceel, (Notre Dame: Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 98} in order to bring forward the idea that since the fall of Adam and Eve the world has been subjected to sin. Individual sins form a collectivity which makes sin a social phenomenon. Despite the fact that each human being has freedom and the will whether to act in an evil way or in a good way being situated in a social order has effects on the individual. He says if one is situated in context of bad examples it amounts to an invitation. In a situation dominated by bad examples we are made to feel the appeal of evil, as though other peoples’
actions were telling us to imitate them. “This is one possible line of conduct; it pleases me very much; it gives substance to a human life; might it not be the thing for you to do?”19 The bad examples will always come with its pressure; an individual may feel isolated from the community by not acting in accordance to the examples which have become symbols of belonging.

In the same trend of thought René Girard sees as most fundamental to human behavior is mimesis. Human beings are creatures who imitate. Without mimesis, there would be no human culture. We only learn to talk and act in society by copying the behavior modeled to us by others. Through mimesis, our thoughts and desires are intertwined with the thoughts and desires of others. Mimesis does not have to lead to conflict as a matter of principle, but as a matter of daily fact, it does. “The conflictive aspect of mimesis can be observed in the nursery. 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.”20 Mass violence does not occur as an independent event. It is an outcome of historically dysfunctional political relationships and structural factors that undermine human security.

2.0 SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN WHICH SIN EXISTS

2.1 Participation in existing sinful structures

Many theologians, despite recognizing that Catholic doctrine has always kept together private or personal sin and social sin, acknowledge that confessional practice, from the sixth century, has concentrated on private sin. This kind of individualization of sin became more

19 Ibid., 112
prevalent in the manuals which were used in the training of priests. Manuals provided individual sins and how a priest would give judgment to each as would a judge. The guiding principle of the manuals was mostly the natural and divine law. Consequently, one of the definitions given for sin in the manual by Heribert Jone and Urban Adelman, quoted by Mark O’Keefe, is that “sin is the free transgression of the divine law.” On the other hand, Henry Davis defines sin as “a morally bad human act, a privation of obligatory good, a deflection from the order of right reason, and therefore from the law of God.” This presentation of sin pays attention to human acts more than the persons and their surrounding conditions. Sin is heavily relegated to individual’s performance of particular acts contrary to reason and hence to divine law. A discrepancy in this attitude is that it was concerned with an individual’s sins but failed to pay attention to the fact that sin is also committed and nurtured within a social context.

O’Keefe is well aware that:

One could, for example, recognize and confess an action motivated by greed but fail to recognize one’s collaboration in economic practices and structures which offered material benefit to the penitent but at grievous cost to the other (unseen) persons. A slave owner ‘of good conscience’ could quite conceivably recognize his/her cruelty to an individual slave but remain completely inattentive to the evil in the institution of slavery itself.

Consequently, in trying to deal with an individual sin we also need to pay much attention to another important condition of the situation of sin, its social context. When we talk of conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa and indeed in the entire continent we must realize that they are a fruit of collective participation of most people into the existing myths, symbols systems, images and stories. Unless we acknowledge that sources of conflicts are a result of individual sinfulness and

---

21 Mark O’Keefe, What are they saying about Social Sin? (New York, Paulist Press 1990), 9
23 O’Keefe, 11
participation in social sinfulness which need correction, we risk the recurrence of the same conflicts again and again.

**3.0 AFRICA VIEWED IN THE LENSES OF NATURAL SCIENCES**

**3.1 Gregory Baum and social sin**

Let us now evaluate the existing social structures with the help of two thinkers: Gregory Baum, a sociologist/theologian and Bernard Lonergan a theologian and philosopher. They will help us to see that in all these conflicts the collectivity or participation in the existing social structures as the root of recurrent wars and hostilities that have a free reign over most of the countries south of the Sahara. Baum’s project was to read classical sociology through the lenses of theology. He sees the danger of defining “sin as a personal deed, a violation of a divine commandment, or an act of infidelity against God freely committed with deliberation… in doing so we have lost the key for understanding the violence in our history and the collective evil in which we are involved.”

Baum talks of the collective blindness which is accompanied by self delusion and self-flattery so that the people involved in it are not aware of their transgression. He actually sees sin as an illness which is so subtle and eats up people without recognizing its features. Baum understands sin as infidelity to God and that destructive communal actions, are largely due to false consciousness, so that sin destroys human beings while they are unable to recognize its features and escape its power. Sin for Baum is both personal and social, so that to deal with sin these two dimensions must be put together. He sums up his analysis in the following words: “social sin resides in a group, a community, a people… what is proper to social sin is that it is not produced by deliberation and free choice. It produces evil consequences but no

---

guilt in the ordinary sense. According to the biblical description, social sin is committed out of blindness. People are involved in destructive action without being aware of it.”

In his analysis of social sin he formulates four levels of blindness: “a) Injustices and dehumanizing trends built into different institutions- social, political, economic, religious- that embody people’s collective life. b) Cultural and religious symbols, operative in the imagination and fostered by society, that legitimate and reinforce the unjust institutions and thus intensify the harm done to growing number of people. c) False consciousness created by institutions and ideologies through which people involve themselves collectively in destructive actions as if they were doing the right thing. d) Collective decisions, generated by the distorted consciousness, that magnify the injustices in society and intensify the power of the dehumanizing trends.”

Helped by these insights from Baum let us now try to evaluate the situation of African suffering and ethnic/tribal conflict as presented in different ecclesial pronouncements.

### 3.1.1 Injustices and Dehumanizing trends built in Ethnocentrism and Tribalism

Let us consider ethnic groups, tribal groups and religion to be social institutions operative in many African countries such that they demand closer analysis if we are to make sense of the root causes of the evil of clashes, wars and violence. Each ethnic/tribal and clan has its own world view but most of these groupings may be analyzed through their social, political, economic, and religious lenses. In talking about the social aspect of sin, Baum perceives that even in what we would consider very personal if well analyzed, we will see that the society is an actor in this sin. Our belonging to an ethnic/tribal group gives us a sense of identity and frame of mind, which is very important to each person. John Mwangi in his article, “Harmony and Peace

---

25 Ibid., 174
26 Ibid., 174-175
in Human Relationships: An African Value and Ideal.‖ makes a good analysis of what we would consider unjust and dehumanizing trends in ethnic institutions. He states:

Ethnic identity, like religion, has a symbolic dimension, which arouses passions linked to pride of a certain groups 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.27

This assertion if reflected upon helps us to see how ethnic identity can be imbued with unnecessary pride, passion and sometimes even arrogant self-idealization which blinds the entire community from seeing reason and making good decisions. If one ethnic group has identified itself as brave soldiers and idealizing the soldier concept that in the long run they may not see the evil of dominating others. This becomes the norm of existence for everyone in the community and even the weakest would see themselves as brave soldiers, hence dominating other tribes. Also politicians, themselves also imbued with such sentiments, come to the masses and use such idealized myths to advance their selfish ends.

Therefore, even the masses of the poor are not only victims but also victimizers of other groupings. In the same way, some ethnic tribes have been identified as economic hubs of a country, and even if someone was extremely poor but belongs to this tribe he/she begins to feel richer than any other tribal grouping. Moreover, the injustices and dehumanizing trends are built in the social, economic and political structures of particular tribes; above all they are built into the myths which rule the mentality of the entire ethnic group. If this is not realized, then we risk failing in our attempts to offer solutions to the problem of ethnic/tribal and religious clashes taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa. When Eleazar Fernandez talks about racism he alludes to the same idea that (myths) prejudice plus collective and structural power equals racism. “The power

to enforce a racial group’s biases or prejudices needs to be understood not merely as a naked imposition of force from above, though it certainly includes this. This power is always a collective and structural power, and it works through societal institutions, involving economics, politics and culture.”

It is quite clear that most of the conflicts in Africa discussed in this paper touch the economic, political and cultural myths or trends of pride that one ethnic group feels superior or an enemy of another group. This is not only operative in the leaders above but it permeates the entire community.

3.1.2 Cultural and Religious Symbols

A symbol is a reality which renders another present. Therefore, cultural and religious symbols make present what they signify. In this section we will look at symbols which are operative in ethnic/tribal social structures which legitimate and foster unjust practices and attitudes. Just to mention but a few of these cultural symbols we would start with the role of the (chief/king) leader. In African traditional setting of many Sub-Saharan countries a king has both political and religious functions. He is the head of the tribe and links the living and the living dead (ancestors). It is in this role that the king, as a symbol of the unity of the tribe is considered a super human. Once a king, he cannot be removed from the throne until he dies. There is a belief that a leader is given from above he is a symbol of the life of the community he is leading. In the circumstances where he proves to be a cruel, irresponsible and inconsiderate, people have to put up with him until he dies because he is still their link with the ancestors. This explains why many leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa and many places who share these myths will not find it easy

---

to relinquish power even when they realize they cannot go on. Hence, bad, irresponsible, and cruel leaders continue to reign. The consequences of their leadership stare us in the face: violence, murder, wars, poverty, disease, and hanger.

Secondly, the clan, tribe or ethnic group as an institution can obscure individual freedom and individual rights. Generally speaking, African traditional religious ethic is centered on life and death. It is when an African is confronted with the mystery of life and death that one discovers oneself and one’s position in the total scheme of things. Life and death form a central symbol of the life and death of the entire community; the way each individual conducts oneself has a direct impact on either the promotion of the life of the community or its cessation. It is a duty of every member of the clan, tribe or ethnic group to make sure that life of every member is protected from its adversaries both within and without the community. Bénézet Bujo makes this point when he states: “in particular they (Africans) discover their relationship with the transcendent God who, by the mediation of the ancestors, bestows meaning upon their lives. In such a religion, focused on the mystery of life and death, humankind itself is naturally the center of concern, though God is always present, at least implicitly.”

Consequently, if the stress is laid on the whole humanity in the clan, the individual is respected as long as she/he is in harmony with the whole group. If one becomes a threat to the life of the community, then she/he may be removed. The problem is who defines nowadays who/what is a threat to the community? The community being the big actor obscures personal freedom to act independently where the community is actually taking a wrong decision about life against the presupposed threats to life.

When it comes to property, in most of Sub-Saharan African, the king is considered the rightful owner of all. Bujo again cites the experience of a number of countries where property

---

was owned by the king. “Several tribes in what are now Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda regarded the king or ‘mwami’ as the ultimate owner of everything in the kingdom, people included, and no one would think of accusing him of thievery, whatever he did with his subject’s property.”30 This way of governance, everyone would argue is outdated, but the question is who has the right of deconstructing the whole myth which surrounds this. Therefore, our point has been to illustrate that the reality of sin or participation in it should not only be left to individuals but also to the entire social fabric.

3.1.3 False Consciousness created by Institutions

Here Baum makes a closer link between personal sin and social sin. Some perverted personal acts could slowly be taken on by the community and eventually appear as though they were not sinful acts at all. In this case, we don’t want to suggest that Baum is saying that social sin is merely a collection of personal sins but as Fernandez puts it that social sin proper is when the subject who is corrupted is the collectivity. It is at this collective level that structures, systems, and institutions become instruments of evil. Ethnic and tribal identities are not bad but when they become instruments of evil it becomes difficult to correct the situation. Violence, murder and plunder are in themselves sinful but with collective blindness when they are done to another challenging tribe they are looked up on as heroic actions, as a sign of bravery and patriotism. In our case it is the false consciousness of the entire tribe that blinds them to the truth that aggression towards another tribal group is bad.

3.1.4 Collective Decisions Generated by Distorted Consciousness

30 Ibid., 36
When one tribal group begins to view violence and murder against another group as normal then most of the decisions made after this continues the evil. It becomes worst when this mentality is taken on by children who are born after this distorted consciousness has already been taken as a tradition. “Distortion interweaves with another distortion that magnifies evil to an unprecedented proportion. Soon the institution becomes corrupt that it poisons the whole atmosphere. It contaminates the air that people breathe and it bequeaths the same atmosphere to the generations that are yet to be born.”31 What Fernandez is saying is very true of what is taking place in Rwanda. After the genocide there have been years of trying to rebuild and bring about reconciliation between the rival Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. Conversely, some research has shown that the new generation born after the genocide or who were very young during the genocide, view the whole history of the killings with highly charged aggressive passion and sentiments. They manifest that dire need of revenge as they are infused with hate because of the stories told them. It wouldn’t be surprising in the years to come to see genocide repeating itself in Rwanda unless this highly distorted consciousness is corrected by using rightful means of reconciliation, means which will deconstruct the myths that the other tribe is of enemies.

Alexander Johnston reflecting on the findings of many academic critics who have written on Rwanda says “ethnic violence in Rwanda appears to satisfy popular expectations of ‘tribalism’ in no uncertain measure; the expectations are of deep-seated ancestral enmities and immutable ‘givens’ of race and ethnicity, of conflicts which are given in nature reflecting historical inevitability and patterns of repetition.”32 Therefore, what sustains these waves of violence and conflict is more than just what we see manifest in the borders drawn by the colonial lords and the

31 Ibid., 67
bloodthirsty politicians; it is the myths which keep feuds alive. Conflict lies in these myths, ideologies, and false consciousness. Moreover, even if we do not deny the contribution of the colonial mistakes, African states must be encouraged to see in their own terms, as the product of their own societies, not merely as the failed attempts to reproduce some model of government designed elsewhere. It is for this reason that reconciliation is a necessary missionary theme for the Church in Africa today because it deals with both the individual and the other. If Africa has to live again through the Christian message it is imperative to deconstruct oppressive myths and replace them with the truth of relationships of selfless love for other manifested in the Trinity.

**3.2 Bernard Lonergan and bias**

In the next section we will be looking at the deep-seated elements which are at the root of African ethnic conflict through the lenses of what Lonergan calls bias. We must commend John Paul II, bishops and other ecclesial bodies for openly pointing out the crisis in many African states especially in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, we still feel neither John Paul II nor the bishops addressed the issue of why the human person is prone to acts of prejudice inherent in tribalism. Orji asks “what is in the human person that makes her/him act in prejudicial manner? Why is bias or prejudice a phenomenon that consumes the human person individually and as a group?”

To answer this question we will engage Lonergan’s notion of bias in dealing with the situation of conflict in Africa. He says “bias is a human tendency to eliminate from consideration data upon which understanding, judgment, and decision will be based because the data is perceived to be a potential threat to our well-being or accustomed ways of viewing the world.”

For Lonergan, bias obscures human understanding and distorts one’s conscious performance.

---

33 Cyril Orji, 44
This is a very important insight in trying to reflect on the anthropological suffering caused by ethnic/tribal or religious conflict in Africa, south of the Sahara. All the parties that are in feuds are not actually fighting for justified reasons of love of their tribe or religion or the God they worship. Generally speaking, at the root of the of these conflicts are blind spots which Lonergan calls deep-seated *scotoma* (bias) that lead to ethnic exclusivism and religious bigotry, which leaves harmful and lasting impression on the social order. The immediate result is the refusal to ask relevant questions when one suspects that the answer to these questions might not work in one’s favor. The decisions made in such circumstances lack objectivity and leads people to do what is easy or favorable to them and their society than what is right. Moreover, bias blinds an individual and the society to the truth and knowledge; it is a flight from understanding, judgment and right decision.

### 3.2.1 Group Bias

Lonergan points out four types of biases in human understanding but for our work it suffices to mention two, namely: group bias and general bias. Lonergan sees group bias as grounded in the decision-making of a group which has its purpose the continued well being of the group. The consequence of this kind of bias is that the whole group becomes blind to the real reality. On the other hand, all human beings are prone to general bias. Group bias is a secret and almost unconscious sin which often finds its expression in ideologies that prevent the group, to which one belongs, from bringing about meaningful social change. “Just as the individual egoist puts further questions up to a point, but desists before reaching conclusions incompatible with his egoism, so also the group is prone to have a blind spot for the insights that reveal its well-
being to be excessive or its usefulness at an end”\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, the interests of a group within a larger society constitute the primary criterion for its actions and its intelligence is deflected from the service of the common good to serve local and particular interest. Consequently, the dominant group uses every means possible to repress the ideas and reflections made by other groups. When it comes to culture, the dominant ethnic group derailed authentic human growth by their bias.

### 3.2.2 General Bias

On the other hand, Lonergan talks of general bias; which involves the human tendency to seek short-term immediate solutions even to complex problems. The criterion of making decision becomes common sense which does not even ask questions which look to the future of the decision taken today. Lonergan bases this type of bias to the common ground of what human beings are: “that men are rational animals, but a full development of their animality is both more common and more rapid than a full development of their intelligence and reasonableness.”\textsuperscript{36} There is a tendency to rush to practical solutions which avoids challenging theoretical questions such that even violence is seen as a solution. It is only if we have not looked at reality in these lenses that we are dumbfounded to see that people are destroying each other over what we would reasonably say not even animals themselves would fight for. The difficult of general bias bases itself on common sense and denies that common sense can be highly limited.

O’Keefe sees that social structures can also be sinful because they emerge from personal decisions which are biased, narrow, and destructive. “They can be sinful in their consequences as other persons react defensively when confronted with structures which are sinful in their

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 248

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 250
source... still others, powerless and thus unable to react defensively, will experience the sinful structures which they can neither oppose nor resist as oppressive and offensive to their human dignity.‖

There lies the cause of violence in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. For example in Kenya since independence in 1963 the presidents of that country have come from only two tribes which pose themselves powerful and would not want to let power go to other tribes simply because they have idealized themselves as leading tribes. The result has been that there have been massive blood protests to this kind of domination. When group bias is ratified by general bias it works the same as when false consciousness is legitimated by collective decisions drawn from distorted consciousness magnifying the rifts which are already operative in ethnic and tribal groups.

The aim of all these reflections is not to demonize ethnic/tribal and religious affiliation but to try to pay extra attention to the reality that if we don’t discern well these social groups and allow them to go to their extremes they can be a source of both individual and social decline. For both Baum’s myth of false consciousness and Lonergan’s bias greatly impact and rank among the chief causes of the human person’s alienation from God, oneself and society. Orji sums up Lonergan on this issue as saying that

“it is when one asks questions whether what one is doing is worthwhile, whether what one is doing is truly good (not just apparent good), and one is enquiring, not about pleasure or pain, not about sensitive spontaneity, not about individual or group advantage, but about objective value, and it is only then that one can effect in one’s living a moral transcendence.”

Since the situation of many in Sub-Saharan Africa reflect these biases and false consciousness it is imperative for the Church to find ways to help the healing of the wounds of division and conflict. This being the situation that there are already divisions, conflicts and suffering in Africa

---

37 O’Keefe, 80
38 Cyril Orji, 88
which are attributed to different reasons as we have seen from the Church documents, what then is the effective mission for the African Church today?

4.0 THE MODEL OF MISSION SINCE VATICAN II

4.1 Incarnation, accompaniment and solidarity

Robert Schreiter sees the models of the missionary theology and spirituality, since the Vatican II, based on three themes: incarnation, accompaniment and solidarity. In the incarnation, the Son of God becomes one with humanity in all things except sin. Therefore, the work of a missionary is supposed to be incarnational, that is living in the situation of the people they go to so that by their presence people may turn to God. Secondly, accompaniment was another model which appeared forcefully in the Latin American thought. “It meant not only walking alongside (rather than ahead) of someone; it bespeaks a constant being present to, and engaging with, the other.”

39 The missionaries who have left an everlasting impact on the Church of Africa are those who accompanied the communities in their relationship with the God who has and is still reconciling the world to himself through the death and resurrection of his Son. The final paradigm is solidarity which is the consequence of accompaniment, of living a life of dialogue, of inserting oneself into another’s reality and struggling with others for the sake of their liberation.

Schreiter recognizes how these models cannot be revoked throughout history but he points out that the context in which all these paradigms were born have drastically changed. For the last two decades reconciliation makes a lot of sense because it is mostly a time when there has been a call for making peace, seeking justice, healing memories, rebuilding broken societies

which are coming out of a century that has known a lot of violence. The Christian understanding of reconciliation might contribute immensely in the work of bringing to earth the reign of God. The mission of the Church serves this reign of God where humans are united with one another and above all with God. Schreiter argues, “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.”

The Church can only facilitate the process of reconciliation but it is fundamentally the work of God, it is only he who initiates healing and restoration in the victim. We as a Church are only ambassadors of Christ the one who has reconciled the world to God.

The enormity of the misdeeds of the past is so great that it overwhelms the human imagination to consider how they might ever be overcome. Who can undo the consequences of a war or of centuries of oppression? Who can bring back the dead? Who can restore a human life twisted by torture, mixed in suffering, or stunned in its growth by loss and deprivation? Yet Christian faith in a God of life, a God of infinite care and mercy is at the base of the possibility of reconciliation.41

Since no human being is capable of undoing the consequences of violence are we going to surrender to fate? Not at all, because God has actually reconciled the world to himself in Christ though this reconciliation is not yet complete without human participation. Reconciliation work begins with God himself who has been offended and despite the claim he has for justice he has brought back the adversary to himself. Therefore, reconciliation begins with the victim, and it does not depend ultimately on the repentance of the wrongdoer for most often they don’t repent. In other words to make reconciliation dependent on the wrongdoer is to hold the victim hostage to the past and make the victim suffer once again. The idea is that the victim is led to a new place

40 Ibid., 140
41 Ibid., 140
where he/she can come to see the world and its brokenness from God’s own perspective, that of grace, mercy and love even in the face of the past suffering.

It is from this perspective that the victim can lead the victimizer to repentance. “Here the process begins with the victim, who experiences God’s healing power. This power leads the victim to call upon God to forgive the wrongdoer, and then moves the victim him/herself to forgive the wrongdoer. The wrongdoer’s experience of being forgiven by the victim leads the wrongdoer to repentance.” The usual process of reconciliation has been a movement that goes from repentance to forgiveness and finally to reconciliation, but in this model the process has to move from forgiveness to reconciliation and finally the repentance of the wrongdoer. In this case reconciliation is more accessible in the pursuit of peace than in the exertion of strict justice. Reconciliation has to be a re-creation or in the language of Fernandez it should be ‘the reimagining of the human,’ though carrying memories of the past one should live the present and future while not negating the past. The new missionary paradigm should be that of reconciliation where God is actually reconciling the world to himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is no other better place than in the celebration of the Eucharist that the work of reconciliation is so prevalent. Reconciliation or put succinctly, communion, is the very life of God, those who take part in the Eucharist share into this communion and become themselves the ambassadors of that communion with God to the world.

4.2 St. Paul and reconciliation

In the New Testament the theme of reconciliation is not so prevalent but the whole of it can be read as an act of God reconciling the world to himself as it was set before its foundation.

---

St. Paul is a champion of reconciliation in the New Testament. What is at the heart of Paul’s theology is what God has done in Christ’s suffering, death, burial and resurrection. Joseph Fitzmyer calls these experiences of Jesus; “Christ-event.” The Christ-event in Paul has ten facets: “justification, salvation, reconciliation, expiation, redemption, freedom, sanctification, transformation, new creation and glorification.”43 These ten facets of one work accomplished by Christ’s earthly and risen life are images drawn from Hellenistic, Jewish background and Paul’s own experience of the risen one. St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to become new creatures through their knowledge of Christ’s love and be reconciled to God.

“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. For our sake he made into sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2Cor 5:18-21).

Fitzmyer suggests that reconciliation has Greco-Roman roots: (katallēgē, katallassein, and diallassein). “In a secular sense, they denote a change in relations in the social or political sphere. They mean a change from anger, hostility, or alienation to love, friendship, or intimacy; feelings may accompany that change, but they are not essential.”44 In Hebrew sense it has a connotation of God reconciling himself to human beings, but for Paul with the Christ-event it is God who is reconciling human beings, enemies or sinners, to himself. On the other hand, Seyoon Kim believes that the image of reconciliation is drawn directly from Paul’s own experience of encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus where he is reconciled to God despite being his persecutor or enemy. With this event even Ananias would call the once persecutor, “Brother Saul.” “Lord I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to the holy ones in Jerusalem… Saul my brother, the Lord has sent me… that you may gain

44 Ibid., No. 72
your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:13-19).” Whichever the origin of the term reconciliation in Paul what is important is that it denotes God’s intention to make other than it is currently, changing the situation especially of enmity, changing it for the better.

Paul having made this experience of the risen Lord he applies his encounter with the Lord to his pastoral ministry first of all in the community of the Corinthians. Through the crucifixion of Christ as a reconciling bridge, all barriers that keep us enemies must be overcome including tribal, ethnic, religious, and racial. The passage (2 Cor. 5:14-21) is the heart of the apostolic gospel in an extended section of the letter which deals with Paul’s defense against those who attack his ministry and its teaching. He 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. He is convinced that in the death of this one man all human beings have died.

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 consequence of this presentation is that all those who have died with Christ in Baptism will live with Christ in resurrection. Therefore, we must live for the one who has died for us and he is raised, a life ignited by the love of Christ. We have to become a new creation; the past has died with the death of Christ. In as much as one participates in Christ’s death one also does in the new creation, the new way of living, new way of knowing, and reconciliation is the effect of this

event of Christ’s death. 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.

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. The paradigm of Adam and Eve in (Rom 5:12) leads to the need for reconciliation. Adam and Eve grasp 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. The only thing that can make right what has gone wrong is the wronged party, God. God has reconciled humanity to himself through the suffering, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, reconciliation is tied up to God being the agent and author of it. For Paul reconciliation is first of all a vertical dimension. “It is God who is the doer and Christ through whom it is done! And it is clear that in Christ’s death “an amazing exchange” took place in which God identified his son with humanity in its alienation and lostness, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”46 The mercy and righteousness of God have embraced and peace through this reconciliation has to reign on the face of the earth.

The second aspect is the paradigm of the wall of hostility (Eph 2:14) between Jews and Gentiles. Historically, the Gentiles were not allowed to cross over this wall to go on to the Jewish side. This wall became for Paul a symbol of reconciliation as God has broken it down in the death of Christ. It is interesting to see the polarities which Paul sets in this passage; no Jews

46 Ibid., 596
and no Gentiles, no male and no female, and no slave and no free man. These polarities can be enriching but at the same time can be a dividing aspect. Therefore, the community of the Church is a place where reconciliation has begun. We now understand why Paul is severe on those who bleach and destroy the unity of the Eucharistic community. Moreover, the Eucharistic communities for Paul must be the neighborhood centers of forgiveness and reconciliation because they are built on the love of God expressed in the Christ-event. God’s righteousness is actually justice in as much 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.

4.3 Reconciliation and forgiveness as urgent need for the Church of Africa

Paul has arrived at all these conclusions because of his experience of the crucified and risen Lord. It is a manifestation of God’s love, for Christ died for us while we were still sinners (Rom 5:8). Christ himself is the embodiment of the love of God. Unlike the disobedient Adam who grasped at what was not his he relinquished what was his to become a slave for our sake (Phil 2:5-11). What we should know about God is revealed by Christ. In reconciling the world to himself, God gives that which is intimate to him, his son, and the son holds nothing but gives it all. We are going to come back to this point when we talk about the life Trinity and the Eucharist.

Sub-Saharan Africa has already gone through harsh moments of brokenness both at its own hands and from the forces external to Africa. Africa has to make a choice to live again after all these conflicts and that choice is found in the deeds of reconciliation through justice and
peace which are the instruments for the Church to serve Africa. The theological naming of the Church in Africa as a Family of God makes the mission 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. These groups were supposed to work for the enrichment of one another but they have eventually stirred up the opposite in many circumstances. As a Family of God all the Christians have to be ambassadors of reconciliation as though Christ was making an appeal through them; be reconciled to God and to one another. 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 upon what the triune God has fulfilled in the death of Christ. In this regard reconciliation in not only an agreement, a consensus or the resolution of a problem or dispute and the elimination of animosity or an end to violence. It has to be a transforming encounter with the triune God.

The Synod recalls that to evangelize is to proclaim by word and witness of life the Good News of Jesus Christ, crucified, died and raised, the Way, the Truth and the Life. To Africa, which is menaced on all sides by outbreaks of hatred and violence, by conflicts and wars, evangelizers must proclaim the hope of life rooted in the Paschal Mystery. It was precisely when, humanly speaking, Jesus' life seemed doomed to failure that he instituted the Eucharist, the pledge of eternal glory, in order to perpetuate in time and space his victory over death… the new evangelization should be centered on a transforming encounter with the living person of Christ.47

The duty of every disciple of Jesus must be to complete Christ’s mission of reconciliation which is best expressed in the Eucharistic identity. “In this Paschal Banquet, God himself comes to meet us; he comes to look for us in our ordinary, everyday situations to unite us in the mystery of the gift of his love, and thus anticipate our definitive union with him in heaven.”48 Consequently, a true Christian identity lies in the body of Christ rather than in the ethnic and tribal affiliation.

5.0 CONCLUSION

47 John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa: No. 57
48 Synod of Bishops, Lineamenta 2006, No. 35
If the Church desires to work for reconciliation through justice and peace it is imperative to develop a spirit of self critique for it is in doing so that we shall find startling revelation of a common human participation in bringing forth a continent to such a state. As we talk of conflicts, wars, poverty, thievery, political and economic failure we must realize that we are confronted with a situation of sinfulness, a disobedience to God, an alienation from both God and neighbor. The solution lies in the return to God and neighbor through the process of reconciliation which God has already worked in the Christ-event. “This entails the communal embodiment of a Christian gospel which calls Jews and Greeks, Belgians and Rwandans to recognize that their truest identity lies in the body of Christ rather than the ethnic and national identities which proved so poisonous in the 20th century.”

There must be a return to our Christian God who is a communion of love, a selfless relationship of persons in love, the triune God. Christians as light to the world are supposed to show to the world the face of God in whom they have their identity. Therefore, what should give us an identity that exists eternally is not our ethnic community but our personal relationship with God’s undying personal identity, a trinitarian identity which respects the differences. We will develop this thought in the next chapter as we reflect on the Trinity.

---

Chapter two

1.0 THE TRINITARIAN COMMUNION AS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL THAT ‘IS’

The second chapter will be a reflection on the life of the Triune God where all the three Persons manifest their work for the salvation and reconciliation of humanity to God’s self. God does not exist except as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a communion of love. There is no Father without the Son and no Son without the Father and no Holy Spirit without the Father and the Son, God is a communion of a loving relationship. In God’s economy each Person of the Trinity conditions the specific work of the other Persons. To be affected by the specific work of the Trinity is to be in relation with all the Persons not simply because the work of the Trinity is one, but that the identity of a Person in the Trinity is constituted in relation to other persons. As a result, we conclude that God does not exist in isolation, God is a communion. It is upon what God is, a communion of love, that our human lives must be modeled, if we are to attain fulfillment. As rooted in the life of the Trinity, our lives will only be fulfilled if we realize that it is actually in the relationship of love that each person realizes one’s uniqueness and that he/she is irreplaceable by another person. Therefore what gives us an identity that exists eternally is not our nature but our personal relationship with God’s undying personal identity. In this way humanity’s true fulfillment is not enshrined in one’s ethnic, tribal or cultural identities but in relationship with God. When our tribal or ethnic identities obscure our relationship with God, in whom we live and move and have our being, the result is alienation with the self, neighbor and the whole universe.

Ethnocentrism can be an idol that robs the uniqueness of individual persons hence hindering personal and responsible choices which most often have been the cause of much
suffering in Africa. Moreover, subjects as merely independent individuals are not persons capable of entering into liturgical communion with God. God has been experienced as a communion of three distinct persons more especially in the Paschal Mystery where Christ through the Spirit reconciles humanity to God in his death. Marking all these events of the Pascha of Christ is the gift of his Body and Blood, the Eucharist, as the covenant which makes for union with him and his whole body. The trinitarian community provides both the criterion and assurance for the possibility of union with others that will not destroy what is unique to each person. Therefore, the mission of reconciliation through justice and peace in Africa, the theme of the second synod for Africa, should base its foundation on the personal relationships in the triune God as experienced in the Eucharistic event.

1.1 God does not exist in isolation

If ever the Church in Africa has to champion the work of reconciliation through justice and peace, Christians must be challenged to live and to be formed by the most important pillars of their faith. The foundation of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity. This doctrine puts together communion and otherness, (one substance, three persons or God’s being coincides with God’s personhood: Father is the source and cause of the Son and the Spirit). As paradoxical as this assertion may be, it shines light on how a Christian God exists as a communion of love. If a communion of love, then, it presupposes otherness because love entails the presence of the object of love. This understanding of a Christian God challenges the Church of Sub-Saharan Africa where it is struggling for reconciliation in a highly ethnocentric milieu, a situation where otherness is at risk because of ethnic identity. The Church as an institution finds itself in a situation where ethnic (blood) ties are more important than the baptismal (ecclesial) ties. Our reflection serves to raise critical self-evaluation of the Church as an institution, but also
as individual Christians in the light of Christian identity that is centered on our participation in the very life of a triune God. “In him we live and move and have our being” (Act 17:28).

In this chapter, we will briefly examine John Zizioulas’ theology of the Trinity, Eucharist and the Church. He is a Metropolitan of Pergamon, in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Born on 10th January 1931, he lectured at the University of Glasgow, and was a visiting professor at King’s College, London and Rome. He is an author of several books and articles including *Being as Communion; Communion and Otherness; and Eucharist, Bishop, Church*. He emphasizes ‘how’ God exists and that God can be known on account of being the Father, from whom the Son and the Spirit originate. He points out that it is in the personhood of the Father that we have communion in God rather than in his substance as in the western tradition. Therefore, the notion of person is necessary if we need to know how God exists; for it is only as a communion of persons that we have experienced God. It is from the personhood of the Father that we have God as a Trinity of persons and it is from the Trinity of persons that the Church comes about as a communion of persons, and that it is the Church which gives each human person his/her true personhood through baptism. There is a necessary movement of relationship from the triune God to the Church and from the Church to individual human persons. To come to these conclusions it is imperative to make a brief presentation of Zizioulas’ ideas about the Trinity which are translated to what human beings are supposed to be.

Zizioulas, in his study of the Greek Fathers especially the Cappadocians (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Naziazus), wants the contemporary world to discover in them the importance of the stress laid by the Fathers on the notion of “Person.” In defending the doctrine of the Trinity against the Monism of the ancient Greek philosophy where the whole cosmos was seen as one substance, even God is not independent of the cosmos. They posit the
“Person of the Father” as the source and cause of the communion of the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The danger that arises is that of subordinationism as it emphasizes that God is one as the Father is the source and cause of the other two persons. This actually puts them in danger of yielding to the critique that if the Father is the source and cause of the Son and the Spirit they must be subordinate to him. Conversely, Zizioulas says by redeeming the notion ‘Person’ from its captivity as a substance, the Fathers avoided subordinationism. Zizioulas writes: “important in trinitarian theology is that God ‘exists’ on account of the Person, the Father, and not on the account of a substance.”\(^5\) Therefore, “the being of God is a relational being… would be unthinkable to speak of One God before speaking of the God who is ‘communion, that is to say the Holy Trinity.’”\(^5\) Zizioulas sees the Greek Fathers redeeming God from his captivity as a ‘substance’ (that self-existent being, that which does not need another being in order to exist) to freedom by explaining the concept of Person. In this case “the Substance of God, ‘God,’ has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion. In this manner the ancient world heard for the first time that it is communion which makes beings ‘be’: nothing exists without it, not even God.”\(^5\)

Zizioulas summarizes the thought of the Cappadocians that makes communion an ontological concept in two ways:

a) There is no true being without communion; nothing exists as an “individual,” conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category. b) Communion which does not come from a “hypostasis,” that is, a concrete and free person, and which does not lead to “hypostases” that is concrete and free persons is not an “image” of the being of God. The person cannot exist without

\(^5\) Ibid, 17
\(^5\) Ibid, 17
communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible.\textsuperscript{53}

Here we can immediately sense the importance of communion and otherness which has very important consequences in our world today struggling with the questions of identity. The issue of identity creates a tension where human beings are struggling with individualism against absorption into polarities such as political or economic affiliation, cultural or religious identity, ethnic or national identity. The Greek Fathers for Zizioulas introduced a great change in the whole movement of Greek philosophy by identifying hypostasis (a term closely linked to and identified with substance: that which is self-existent) with person (persona or prosopon).

Zizioulas points out some aspects of the origin of the term person: the first is that it was already in use in ancient Greek everyday life to mean the part of the head that is below the cranium. This was taken up in theater and tragedy to show how a human person can rise in freedom above the harmonious world order.

The theater, and tragedy in particular, is the setting in which the conflicts between human freedom and the rational necessity of a unified and harmonious world, as they were understood by the ancient Greeks, are worked out in dramatic form. It is precisely in theater that man strives to become a “person” to rise up against this harmonious unity which oppresses him as rational and moral necessity.\textsuperscript{54}

This harmonious view leaves a human being without freedom such that one’s “person” is nothing but a mask (prosopeion) he/she wears to hide his/her identity in order to do what he cannot do without it. On the other hand, “as a result of this mask man- the actor, but properly also the spectator – has acquired a certain taste of freedom, a certain specific “hypostasis,” a certain identity, which the rational and moral harmony of the world in which he lives denies him.”\textsuperscript{55}

Through the mask he has learnt how to become free even for the shortest period. It took many

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 18
\textsuperscript{54} John D. Zizioulas, \textit{Being as Communion}, 32
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 33
years for the Greek thought to identify hypostasis (substance) with person. Finally, we have the Roman view of persona having the same Greek connotations but it leaned more towards emphasizing the concrete individuality. “Persona is the role which one plays in one’s social or legal relationships, the moral or “legal” person which either collectively or individually has nothing to do with the ontology of the person.”\textsuperscript{56} In Greco-Roman world “person” has no ontological content. However, they opened a way towards the movement that human personhood would eventually attain the ontological content through the Cappadocians. They achieved this by: “a) a radical change in cosmology which would free the world and man from ontological necessity; b) an ontological view of man which would unite the person with the being of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity.”\textsuperscript{57}

Person should not be understood as in modern terms as a centre of activity and consciousness for it leads to individualism which is contrary to what the Fathers had in mind. The concept of person in God the Fathers had in mind was 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. Zizioulas argues:

Personhood is not about qualities or capacities of any kind; biological, social or moral. Personhood is about hypostasis i.e. the claim to uniqueness in the absolute sense of the term, and this cannot be guaranteed by reference to sex or function or role or, even cultivated consciousness of the self and its psychological experiences, since all these can be classified, thus representing qualities shared by more than one being and not put to absolute uniqueness.\textsuperscript{58}

In Greek philosophy ‘person’ did not have an ontological content of its own; only a substance did. What the Fathers have done is to make the person that which makes being “be” for it is the

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 34
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 35
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 47
person that constitutes being and enables entities to be what they truly are. In this way Zizioulas argues that the identification of person with substance had two major consequences:

a) The person is no longer adjunct to a being, a category we add to a concrete entity once we have first verified its ontological hypostasis. It is itself the hypostasis of the being. b) Entities no longer trace their being to being itself - that is, being is not an absolute category in itself- but to the person, to precisely that which constitutes being, that is, enables entities to be entities.\textsuperscript{59}

This trend of thought then leads us to an assertion that identification of substance with person calls for an understanding that God’s being coincides with his personhood. Now that personhood presupposes relation, then, God does not exist in isolation but rather in communion of persons. The question we must ask ourselves at this point is that if God cannot be conceived in isolation is it possible to think of uniqueness in God’s self?

**1.2 God as a relationship which respects distinction**

God’s being depends on the Father who is the cause and source of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father freely wills this communion. In this case, the Father is not constrained by necessity to communion but he does so in freedom. Zizioulas shows that God in the freedom of the Father wills communion, i.e. communion and otherness is willed by the Father; hence the person of the Father forms an ontological category. Therefore, “the Holy Trinity is a primordial ontological concept and not a notion added to the divine substance or rather that flows from it.”\textsuperscript{60} Therefore, God cannot be conceived without relationship, otherness and freedom. “Outside the Trinity there is no God, that is, no divine substance, because the ontological “principle” of God is the Father. The personal existence of God (the Father) constitutes his substance, makes it

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 39
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 41
hypostases. The being of God is identified with the person.”⁶¹ It is through understanding God in this way that we can move on to human beings.

The human person’s demand for absolute freedom whose nature (biological, social, and political) puts constraints on freedom must involve a “new birth” in water and spirit (baptism). “And it is precisely the ecclesial being which “hypostasizes” the person according to God’s way of being. That is what makes the Church the image of the Triune God.”⁶² The drive of the human being towards otherness is rooted in the divine call to Adam. The call of Adam implies three distinct but interrelated things, and these are:

- relationship, freedom and otherness, all of them being interdependent. A call involves, indeed establishes, a relationship, but it is not a call unless it implies otherness – the recipient who cannot be the same as the calling one – and the invitation to respond with a ‘yes’ or a ‘no,’ not in a verbal or in a moral (freedom of the will) but in an ontological sense, that is, by the sheer acknowledgment, recognition and affirmation of the calling one as other, as an identity other than one’s own, at the same time as one granting the called one an identity in the form of a thou (or a name: Adam).⁶³

In this way the coming into being of a human being as a particular being different from all other animals depends on the call from the Other, God and not biology. Therefore, if there is no God then there is as well no human being and no freedom and no relationship. Freedom without God reduces human beings to that level of every other animal for what differentiates humans from animals is the call from God into relationship with God’s self and the rest of creation. Zizioulas continues to say that the Church is not simply an institution; she is a mode of existence, a way of being. The mystery of the Church, even in its institutional dimension, is deeply bound to the being of God.

---

⁶¹ John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 41

⁶² Ibid., 19

Human beings attain absolute freedom in relation to the Church. “The result of this freedom of the person from nature, of the hypostasis from biology, is that in the Church man transcends exclusivism. When man loves as a biological hypostasis, he inevitably excludes others: the family has priority in love over ‘strangers.’”64 This is a sweeping idea as it opens us to reconsider our Christian identity that we are truly human in relation to God’s personhood and the Church which is bound to the very being of God. Our being as a true image of God is deeply bound to being a member of the Church for it is in the Church that we exist as God does; a communion of loving persons. This identity transcends all forms of exclusivism in which our biological hypostasis puts us. “This way of being is not moral attainment, something that man accomplishes. It is a way of relationship with the world, with the other people and with God, an event of communion, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an individual, but only as an ecclesial fact.”65 Therefore, when we talk of the Church in Africa as having an urgent mission of reconciliation it should be nothing less than making Christians exist the way God exists, in communion which respects otherness.

The doctrine of the Trinity in the light of the Cappadocians offers an idea of God, “who exists as a communion of free love of unique, irreplaceable, and unrepeatable identities, that is, true persons in the ontological sense. It is of such a God that man is meant to be an image.”66 Moreover, the doctrine of the Trinity is not just there as an object for speculation but for a personal relationship with God, with others and with the world. Life is about communion of persons in the Trinity who have freely entered into relationship by self-giving and self-offering back to the one who gives first. Human participation in this life depends on being a member of

64 John D. Zizioulas, Being as Communion: 57
65 Ibid., 15
66 John Zizioulas, Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church, 168
that which images God in relationship, the Church a mystery founded on the movement of love, of self-offering and offering back all what was received. The waters of baptism should flow more deeply than the blood of tribalism. “If Christians are to genuinely embrace their calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, their Christian identity must be primary – before state, before markets, before tribe, even before (biological) family.”

Nonna Verna Harrison sums up the progression of the argument of Zizioulas in the following way:

As we have seen, the source and paradigm of this structure is the Holy Trinity, where the Father is the cause of the Son and the Spirit and encompasses them within his own unity. In the context of ecclesiology, Zizioulas sees this pattern as central on two other levels as well. It occurs in Christ understood as corporate personality, where the divine Son as head unites all his members in one body, one communion event. It occurs a third time in the Church, where the bishop as head unites the members in one Eucharist. On each of these levels, one person is the source and center constituting the unity among all the others.

The otherness of the person different from oneself is rightly seen as an occasion for communion, not as so often an occasion for fear and hostility. Zizioulas connects the fear of otherness to the Fall and death and suggests that in reality otherness is constitutive of unity, as in the Holy Trinity, and the difference is grounded in relatedness. Their otherness itself and their mutual relation constitute the eternal event of communion which is the Holy Trinity. The trinitarian communion is the foundation of all that is; the human person, the Church and the whole creation. The Eucharist sums up this movement which has its climax in the Paschal Mystery. The Eucharist is an event of communion of all with God, an event of reconciliation. How then does this trend of thought put the Eucharist as an event of communion with God?

1.3 Eucharist as communion in the corporate personality of Christ

---

67 Jay J. Carney, Waters of Baptism, Blood of Tribalism, 22
68 Nonna Verna Harrison, Zizioulas on Communion and Otherness, in St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 42, No. 3-4, 1998, 289
Athanasios Melissaris states that “starting from the distinctiveness of the trinitarian persons, and not, as we saw, from the divine substance, eastern patristic thought saw human beings primarily as relational, ecstatic entities, whose true nature is fully completed and blossoms in communion and fellowship with one another.” 69 Zizioulas articulates a positive and life-giving way of affirming absolute human freedom as he says human personhood is actualized through “ekstasis of being, a movement towards communion which leads to transcendence of the boundaries of the self and thus to freedom.” 70 Therefore freedom is a movement beyond the boundaries of one’s given nature. One can transcend the limits of one’s own nature by freely choosing to place one’s identity in God, in other human persons, or in the natural world. This is the movement of love, of self-offering. It brings the actualization of an authentically personal existence, in which one’s very identity is constituted precisely as relational through a network of interconnectedness with others. Human limitation, fragmentation and death, caused by the Fall, can definitively be overcome only through communion with the Holy Trinity in the body of Christ, the whole body, and that is only achieved in the eschaton.

For Zizioulas it is the Christ of the parousia who comes from the future kingdom of God to become himself the unity at the centre of diversity. Christ is the one who holds in critical unity-in-multiplicity the many, the icon of which is the bishop at the centre of the communion of believers, which itself is an icon of the Holy Trinity in which this communion participates. 71 Christ, the head, is at the center of this communion with the whole body, the Church, and unity between the two is made present here and now in the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist brings two things together; communion and otherness, as well as the “One” and the “many.” One person becomes the center where many others gather around to form a communion

71 Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993), 185
of persons. The first category is the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Father being the center. The second is Christ, the head, on whom all the members of the ecclesial assembly are made one in his body and the third is the bishop uniting together the Eucharistic community. In this way, then, the person is clearly the primary ontological category rather than the nature and its qualities. This single individual, Christ, is corporate because he is identified with the community and despite being a corporate person he remains an individual person.

Zizioulas in talking about the Eucharist as a communion event with God stresses the centrality of Christ as the corporate personality. The Holy Spirit is the one who constitutes Christ as a corporate person in the community of the Church gathered around the bishop. Christ is the corporate person because many people become one in him. Zizioulas argues that St. Paul articulates it more profoundly as he writes:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion (koinonia) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we partake of the one bread. In this highly significant passage, the dominant idea is that “the many” form “one” body identified with the bread of the Eucharist.  

Consequently, in the person of Christ many people become one through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Echoing St. Paul “for Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14) the Eucharist bequeaths on Christians a strong ontological bond with the person Christ who offers himself.

Let us now briefly present the foundation of the idea of Christ as the corporate personality in the Eucharist where through him ‘many’ are united in to ‘one body.’ Zizioulas in examining different texts referring to the Last Supper makes an observation that they all point to

---

72 John Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries*, (Brookline: Massachusetts, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 53
one thing though presented differently by various texts. “They all agree on the connection of the Supper with the “many” or “you” (pl), “for” or “in the place of” (anti or peri) whom the one offers himself.”73 This connection of the one and many in the Eucharist has its roots in the Old Testament understanding of the “Servant of Yahweh” with whom Jesus identified himself in the New Testament. This goes back to Israel’s own consciousness of unity through this Servant of God. Hence, Zizioulas states:

This connection of the Divine Eucharist with a sense of the unity of the “many” in the “One,” effected through the tradition of the “Servant of God” is already firmly established in the consciousness and life of the primitive Church by the first century as shown by the oldest surviving liturgical texts after the Last Supper... we repeatedly read the phrase “of Jesus Thy Servant,” clearly in connection with the hymns of the Servant of God in the book of Isaiah.74

The notion of Jesus as the Servant of God can also be found in the Didache, in 1 Clement in the first century, and has survived in the ancient hymns (Phil 2:6-11), and such connection of the Divine Eucharist to the Servant of God is alive in the mind of the Church through the ages. It is for this reason that Paul sums it up in his great proclamation quoted above, “… we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

On the other hand, the sense of unity in the primitive Church comes alive again in the Johannine community where this corporate person is the “Son of Man” especially in his section of the true food which endures to eternal life. Such that “in contrast with manna which God gave to Israel through Moses, this food is the “true bread,” which as that “which came down from heaven” is none other than the “Son of Man... hence communion in the Eucharist is described there as eating not simply the flesh of the Lord, but the flesh of the Son of Man.”75 Moreover, the Son of Man in John’s Gospel is identified both as the bread of life and the reality which is par

73 Ibid., 53
74 Ibid., 54
75 John Zizioulas, Eucharist, Bishop, Church, 56
excellence inclusive of the many. For Zizioulas the words of Jesus; “he who eats my flesh and
drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (Jn 6:56) are profoundly linked to the unity of the
Church as expressed in the Last Supper in chapters 13-17. “The insistent appeal, “abide in me,
and I in you” (Jn 15:4-16) should not be understood without reference both to the Eucharistic
presuppositions of this text, and to the Lord’s property of taking up the new Israel and including
it into Himself.”76 Therefore, through the Divine Eucharist the “many” become a unity to the
point of identity with Christ. Christ the Servant of God and the Son of Man incorporates in
himself the new Israel, the Church into his very person.

Miroslav Volf sums up the ideas of Zizioulas on the Eucharist in three important aspects.
The first is that the Eucharist should not be understood in a very mechanical way as an
instrument which causes grace because this negates the central theme that the Eucharist is a
participation in the corporate person of Christ. It is not given to Christians from one individual,
the priest, but it is a liturgical mode of life for all the participants. “Zizioulas understands the
Eucharist above all as a liturgical act, as the liturgical mode of life, of the congregation. It is not
an isolated means of receiving grace, but rather an assembly (synaxis), a community, a network
of relationships, in which a man subsists.”77 Therefore, the whole person of Christ is received in
every celebration of the Eucharist and everyone in the assembly is incorporated into this relation
with Christ and is incorporated into the life of the Trinity because Christ (Son) is in an
indestructible relation with the Father and the Spirit.

The second aspect is the notion of the corporate personality: “to eat the body of Christ
and to drink his blood means to participate in him who took upon himself the ‘multitude’ … in

76 Ibid., 56
77 Miroslav Volf, After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity, (Michigan, William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 98
order to make them a single body, his body… this is why in the Eucharist, the body of the one (Christ) and body of the many (Church) are identical.” Here rests the ecclesiology of Zizioulas that the ‘Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.’ Thus, “the Eucharist is the place where the Church, the body, and Christ, the head, become one body, the whole body of Christ, and thus ‘completely’ identical. All distance between Christ and the Church is overcome insofar as the Holy Spirit personalizes Christ within the Church and brings him alive, in a concrete state.” It is with this understanding that our thesis puts together the Trinity and the Eucharist in the Church’s mission of reconciliation, justice and peace in Sub-Saharan Africa. Christian identity understood in this way has stunning repercussion because it puts our relationship with Christ above our biological identity. Consequently, with the Eucharistic event comes the challenge of confronting the situation of conflict born on a larger scale from the presupposed ethnic superiority of some group. Here we want to echo the bishops in the Lineamenta for the second synod for Africa in saying:

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.

The third aspect is that the identification of the Church and Christ occurs through the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit the *eschaton* and history are all realized in the Eucharist. Zizioulas says that “the Eucharist is not only an assembly in one place, that is, historical realization and manifestation of the eschatological existence of man; it is at the same time also *movement*, a progress towards this realization. Assembly and movement are two fundamental

---

78 Ibid., 98
79 Ibid., 99
characteristics of the Eucharist.”\(^{81}\) This movement is towards the full realization of the kingdom of God, which enters here and now into history through the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, “in the Eucharist, the *eschaton* is realized in and through historical reality … that what actually occurs in the Eucharist is not be understood as a reality *parallel* with that of heaven, but rather as *identical* with it.”\(^{82}\) It follows that Christian life should not entertain a break between history and the future, between what we do in relation to God and what we do in relation to other human beings, but our divine-human relationship incorporates in itself the issues of social justice and mission to make what is ‘yet’ and ‘not yet’ a reality in history.

### 2.0 Practical Implications of Zizioulas Thought

#### 2.1 Eucharistic community as a place of reconciliation

At the centre of Zizioulas’ thought is the desire to make the doctrines of the Church not merely objects of speculation but that they should also inform and benefit concretely the people who believe them. It is for this reason that he feels understanding such doctrines in terms of the ancient Greek philosophy’s essence and substance makes us lose the relational character in the mysteries these doctrines try to bring to light, especially the mystery of the Trinity. Hence, the Cappadocians in emphasizing the “person” open the doctrine of the Trinity to the relational character on which it is founded. Personhood is not about qualities or capacities of any kind: biological, social or moral, but it is about hypostasis which makes each person unique in relation to others. “Personhood is the total fulfillment of being.”\(^{83}\) Individualism is a fruit of the essence/substance understanding of who a person is. “Individualization is precisely the fact that accounts for the impossibility of real communion, because it implies distance and hence division

\(^{81}\) John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*: 61  
\(^{82}\) Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 101  
\(^{83}\) John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 47
instead of difference.”

Melissaris says that “most significant of all is the fact that what mattered was the freedom exercised by each trinitarian person to be unique and different from the other two, and yet remain in relation with them. Thus communion does not threaten otherness... it generates it.”

Zizioulas’ emphasis that God in God’s own self is a life of communion and that God’s involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation, in general, into this communion with God’s very life, then, the work of reconciliation is not only a necessity but an imperative.

Our journey with Zizioulas thus far has revealed that God’s being as communion has direct consequences in the way of doing mission. The Holy Spirit has a very important role in the mission of communion or of drawing all things back to God in Christ. When he speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit he points out that both the New Testament and the Greek Fathers show two types of pneumatology. On one hand, we have historical pneumatology (the Holy Spirit is fully dependent on Christ, as being the agent of Christ to fulfill the task of the mission) prevalent in the gospel of John where the advocate is sent from the Father and the Son. “The advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you all that I told you ... for if I do not go, the advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (Jn 14: 26, 16:7). Here we find very vivid the reason why the western creed says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the filioque, unlike the eastern creed which insists on the Spirit proceeding from the Father just like the Son. On the other hand, we have the eschatological pneumatology which is an understanding that the Holy Spirit is the source of Christ, and by the presence of the Spirit the Church is also understood as an eschatological reality, a coming together of the people of God into the kingdom. The Christian mission has been

---

84 John Zizioulas, Human Capacity and Incapacity: Theology, 442
85 Athanasios Melissaris, The Challenge of Patristic Ontology 475
both of historical and eschatological pneumatology in nature, with one community emphasizing one aspect over the other. Zizioulas writes:

In the New Testament writings themselves we come across both the view that the Spirit is given by Christ, particularly the risen and ascended Christ (there was no Spirit yet, for Christ had not yet been glorified). And the view that there is, so to say, no Christ until the Spirit is at work, not only as a forerunner announcing his coming, but also as the one who constitutes his very identity as Christ, either at his baptism (Mark) or at his very biological conception (Matthew and Luke). \(^8^6\)

Christology and pneumatology should not be separated because at all times God is a Trinity. The second understanding which prioritizes eschatological pneumatology proposes mission to be the gathering of all people into the kingdom through overcoming that which hinders the presence of the kingdom here and now. Petros Vassiliadis in his article looks at the second pneumatology in the following way:

Taking this (eschatological) pneumatology seriously into consideration, and building upon the eschatological understanding of the Church, one unavoidably concludes that the mission of the Church deals with the problem of ethics, i.e., the problem of overcoming the evil in the world, not primarily as a moral and social issue, but mainly, and for some even exclusively, as an ecclesial one, in the sense that moral and social responsibility of Christians, i.e., their mission in today’s pluralistic world, is the logical consequence of their ecclesial (i.e., eschatological) self-consciousness. \(^8^7\)

In this view the essence of the Church is not mission, but the Eucharist and the ‘Divine Liturgy’ which is that work of eschatological ordering of things into the kingdom of God. Such that “mission is the meta-liturgy, the liturgy after liturgy, reconciliation, however, being the primary precondition of the Eucharist, automatically becomes the primary objective of mission.” \(^8^8\) Both the Old and New Testaments attests to the fact that reconciliation is the work of God, who through the Messiah, or the “Servant of God,” in the last days of history would establish his kingdom. “The start of the eschatological period will be sounded by the gathering of

\(^8^6\) John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 127-8
\(^8^8\) Ibid., 38
all nations, and by the descent of God’s Spirit upon the sons and daughters of God. It will also include the calling of all the dispersed and afflicted people of God, as well as the Gentiles, into one place, where they will be reconciled to God and become one body united in him” (Micah 4:1-4; Isa. 2:2-4; Ps 147:2-3).\(^{89}\) While in the Gospel of John we read that the high priest “prophesied that Jesus should die… not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad” (Jn 11:51-52). In this mind set, Christian mission is not just a proclamation of a set of religious convictions, doctrines and moral commands, but the coming of the kingdom, this is, the good news of a new reality to be established in the last days. “This has its centre the crucified and resurrected Christ, the incarnation of God the logos and his dwelling among us human beings, and his continuous presence through the Holy Spirit in a life of communion, in a life of full scale reconciliation.”\(^{90}\) Christ as the messiah who comes at the eschaton is actually the centre where the process of gathering all into one should converge into the corporate personality. Therefore, the Eucharist cannot be worthily celebrated where there are factions according to race, ethnic group, nationalism and even worse among the Church members. The missiological imperative of the Christian community stems exactly from the awareness of the Church as a dynamic and corporate body of reconciled believers commissioned to witness to the coming of the kingdom. “And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. “We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5: 19-20).

2.2 Eucharistic community as a place of forgiveness, justice and peace

In the gospel of Matthew Jesus says: “therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the

\(^{89}\) Ibid., 39  
\(^{90}\) Ibid., 40
altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5.23–24). The logic of Jesus is highly startling because he asks the one who is supposedly offended not to make an offering until she/he has made things right with those who offended him/her. We would all have thought the passage should have read; “therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that you have something against your brother...” The difference is that we would all have addressed the remark to angry people who need to forgive. But Jesus addressed his remark to people who need to be forgiven by those they have angered. Jesus’ approach is the way of true wisdom. We face the dilemma of forgiveness and justice in this passage as Jesus addresses the offended; is justice a prerequisite to forgiveness or is it that forgiveness does not depend on justice? In this passage we find two essential things which must be fulfilled by those who offer an offering to God: forgiveness and peace with the wrongdoer.

There are many definitions given to the term forgiveness but our interest in this section is to see how it involves both the perpetrator and the victim. The normal trend has been that the perpetrator of harm should ask for forgiveness and the wounded party should grant it. Jesus in the passage above does not cancel this procedure but points to something more, that is, both sides must be changed by the encounter with one another. Geiko Muller Fahrenholz argues that “much more than a word or a gesture, forgiveness is a genuine process of encounter, of healing, of the releasing of new options for the future. A guilty and painful past is redeemed in order to establish reliable foundations for renewed fellowship in dignity and trust. Forgiveness frees the future from haunting legacies of the past.”91 Different theological positions have shown that when they talk about reconciliation and forgiveness they model it on God’s reconciling work as a paradigm on which to base human relationships, a way to overcoming conflicts and seeking harmony. Each

trend of thought has either emphasized one aspect or more of the following interrelated moments as observed by Ernesto Valiente: “1) a trustful uncovering of the events and sources of conflict; 2) the pursuit of Justice that responds to the claims of the victims and engages in the task of constructing a socio-political order that fosters communal life; and 3) and forgiveness led by the victims, who relinquish certain legitimate rights to retribution in order to open the possibility for reconciliation.” Many have argued that forgiveness cannot replace justice but has to go beyond justice if it is to avoid two interrelated dangers of manipulating forgiveness to favor the victimizer or on the other hand, emphasis on justice blinds the victims from forgiveness and they become victimizers themselves. Valiente argues:

“In many instances, the value of forgiveness has been manipulated to promote a cheap reconciliation that trivializes the demands of the victims and ignores the roots of the conflict and thus fosters a climate of political impunity. Alternatively, the events that transpired in Rwanda and Bosnia show how the value of justice can also be used to rationalize unwillingness to forgive, the demonization of the oppressor, and the transformation of the victim into an avenging victimizer.

In all this forgiveness must be a pursuit of a genuine humanity in every person and this search transcends all races, ethnic identity, nationalism and biology. What is genuinely human thus far, we have said, is found in the communion with God whose being is communion. In our situation of Sub-Saharan Africa, where there stands a categorization of oppressors and the oppressed, the wrongdoer and the wronged, forgiveness becomes a plausible way to breaking that wall of hostility. The process of forgiveness which will keep in mind the aspects of restorative justice will be essential for reconciliation. In this way the process does not only look at one party but at both parties and lead them to mutual disarmament of one another’s hostility. Fahrenholz suggests that the tool for mutual disarmament is confession, “a process by which one

---

93 Ibid., 266
returns to the point at which the original evil act was done. It is painful to enter into this shame. It is more painful still to acknowledge this act in the face of those who suffered it.”

Confession is one side of the coin; the other is the attitude of the victim which is very important at this moment if they have to break the bond of mutual suspicion in which violence has put them.

As they (victims) are faced with the ‘disarming’ confession of the perpetrator, they too are brought back to the origin of their hurt. It is by no means easy to allow this source of shameful humiliation to be reopened. Indeed, it may be more difficult to acknowledge the evil one has suffered than the evil one has done. The experience of brutally enforced powerlessness impairs our self worth more deeply than the experience of falsely gained superiority.

Therefore, forgiveness is more than just an encounter between the victim and the victimizer; it is a mutual exchange of pain that frees both parties from the bondage in which they have put one another as a result of violence. It is a mutual return to their humanity and the discovery of their true identity which is no other than that image of a relational God, Father, and Son and Holy Spirit. The form of justice that works better in this regard is “restorative (reconciliative) justice.”

The aim of this form of justice is to identify needs, starting with those of the victims. Surprisingly, people who have been seriously wronged do not have as many needs as we would imagine. For example many of the victimized families in South Africa, after Apartheid, only wanted to know where their relatives who had been killed secretly by government agents were buried. Other needs may include: safety, to be heard, restitution and accountability, participation, answers to their questions and above all the need for healing. While the needs of the offenders will range from knowledge of harm they have caused, coping with guilt, sharing in the decisions about making things right, being integrated into the community and healing. Reconciliative justice also seeks to identify obligations by both parties and promote healing of the dehumanized humanity. Christopher Marshall argues:

---

94 Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, The Art of Forgiveness, 25
95 Ibid., 26
because they are bound together to the event, both the 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.96

This can only be achieved when there is enough collaboration between the victim and the victimizer, an engagement of one another such that mutual agreement is reached through dialogue about the reality which took place. Through forgiveness the two parties are able to forge the future, for vengeance leads to vengeance and in such a state there will be no healing. Desmond Tutu speaking to the Rwandans in Kigali emphasized the need for forgiveness without which there was no future for them. “I told them that the circle of reprisal and counterreprisal that had characterized their national history had to be broken and that the only way to do this was to go beyond retributive justice to restorative justice, to move on to forgiveness, because without it there was no future.”97 Consequently, peace will not only be the absence of strife but rather a return to the ontological value of the human person which is made and actualized in the Eucharistic liturgical assembly where we come to share in the life of one another and in the very life of God. Let us conclude this section with a quotation from George Hunsinger:

The Eucharistic ethos, the ethos of forgiveness, which is not merely an inner state but is experienced as a gathering and coexistence with the person who has hurt us, in a future which we do not control and which has no end, “the age which does not end or grow old,” in order for the Eucharist to be “for forgiveness of sins and unto eternal life” for those who take part in it and receive communion, it must also be for forgiveness on our part of the sins of others and “unto eternal life” with them in the gathering of the kingdom.98

Therefore the Eucharist as a celebration of the eschaton in history has its climax in the forgiveness of enemies. In this regard reconciliation with enemies is necessarily the precondition

97 Desmond Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness, (New York, Image, Doubleday, 1999), 260
98 George Hunsinger, Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), 283
for the celebration of the Eucharist. Hence the Eucharist is truly a sacrament of reconciliation of all who are different from us and above all it is a sacrament of embrace with our enemies.

2.3 Peace as mutual embrace

The process of forgiveness makes sense when it becomes a way of making space for others not just for the sake of accepting suffering because that does not make any sense but it has to become a sharing in the prayer of the corporate person on the cross, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). Volf argues that with this prayer, Jesus’ suffering not only crosses the threshold of acceptance of suffering by an innocent man but it is also a prayer for the forgiveness of the torturers. Hence, it assumes a redemptive value.

99 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 125

100 Ibid., 125

It is for this reason that forgiveness is the most difficult thing that the human heart can offer freely because it adds to the pain already endured through the act of relinquishing the rightful claims of retribution. However, forgiveness viewed in the light of the cross of Christ, in the words of Volf is “the boundary between exclusion and embrace. It heals the wounds that the power-acts of exclusion have inflicted and breaks down the dividing wall of hostility.”

It is here that St. Paul resounds more than ever, that in the cross of Christ lies the antidote of the hostility that has deep seated origins, the pain and humiliation suffered. Forgiveness “leaves a distance between people, an empty space of neutrality that allows them either to go their separate ways in what is sometimes called “peace” or to fall into each other’s arms and restore broken
communication.”¹⁰¹ These two polarities, exclusion (they are not us) and the ability to embrace one another to forge the future after learning from the hurtful past are prevalent in the situation of Rwanda today. Volf again captures this dilemma forcefully and draws conclusions that our going our separate ways after forgiveness does not make for the peace that we are seeking, a peace that lies in the ability to embrace our former enemies even when they persistently feel they cannot be reconciled. He says:

Going one’s own way is the boldest dream 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 will remain ‘they’ and we will remain ‘us.’ Such clean identities, living at safe distances from one another, may be all that is possible or even desirable in some cases at certain junctures of people’s mutual history.¹⁰²

This stance leaves a lot to be desired because peace becomes the atmosphere where there is no conflict as long as our ways do not cross; the ability to stay far from the other, and this exclusion is wrongly understood as peace. And yet “parting of the ways is clearly not yet peace. Much more than just the absence of hostility sustained by the absence of contact, peace is communion between former enemies. Beyond offering forgiveness, Christ’s passion aims at restoring such communion.”¹⁰³ The death of Christ is a challenge and model for our human relations. St. Paul writes, “But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” and again he continues “indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life” (Rom 5:8, 10). Hence “the cross is the giving up of God’s self in order not to give up on humanity; it is the consequence of God’s desire to break the power of human enmity without violence and receive human beings into divine communion. The goal of the cross is the dwelling of human beings ‘in

---

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 126
¹⁰² Ibid., 126
¹⁰³ Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 126
the Spirit, and in God.”

It is from here that Volf draws powerful conclusions that forgiveness is a passage to embrace. “The arms of the crucified person are open – a sign of a space in God’s self and an invitation for the enemy to come in.”

Two things happened with the cross; the self-giving to overcome enmity and creation of space to receive the enemy back in God’s own person. Forgiveness does the same in human beings, overcoming enmity and the creation of space for our enemies in our own being so as to receive them as fellow siblings in God’s communion. This is what we have already shown takes place in God’s self, the offering all and receiving all, on one hand, and on the other, giving back all what was received without reserve in love. What happens in God’s self through the cross has created space for human beings to be received into that communion.

This ritual of the cross, where space is created for us to be received into God’s self, is reenacted anew each day in the celebration of the Eucharist. God does this freely and we cannot claim that we merit it. It is grace poured lovingly into our hands which must be acknowledged and appreciated. “Inscribed on the very heart of God’s grace is the rule that we can be its recipients only if we do not resist being made into its agents; what happens to us must be done by us. Having been embraced by God we must make space for others in ourselves and invite them in - even our enemies.”

The parable of the unforgiving servant in (Mt 18: 32-33) echoes what God is doing in the Eucharist, creating space for the enemy. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' “By breaking the bread we share not only in the body of the crucified and resurrected Lord, but also in the multi-membered body of the Church. The Eucharist tells us that each member is not external to

104 Ibid., 126
105 Ibid., 126.
106 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 129
the other members.” By emphasizing the church as an important element in sharing in the corporate personality of Christ, it seems to sideline all those who are not visible members of the Church. It sounds like another way of affirming the statement: outside the Church, no salvation.

Conversely, if what Zizioulas says about corporate or catholic personality is well understood, we come to appreciate that his thought, grounded in baptism where catholic personality is made, also encompasses all creation and goes beyond the boundaries of the Church, for it is the Spirit who is at the source of this creation. In baptism we become a new creation which is united with God and the entire universe. In Proposition 48 of the Second Synod for Africa captures what it means to be a new creation through baptism and above all through one’s participation in the Eucharistic liturgy. Once one has become a new creation through baptism, mission characterizes one’s identity, an ambassador of reconciliation.

It is in the commitment to transform unjust structures and to re-establish the dignity of man, created in the likeness and image of God that the Eucharist assumes in life the significance it has in celebration. This dynamic movement opens up to the world: it questions the process of globalization which not infrequently increases the gap between rich countries and poor countries, it denounces the political and economic forces that dilapidate the earth's resources, it reiterates the grave requirements of distributive justice in the face of inequalities that cry out to heaven, it encourages Christians to commit themselves and to work in political life and social activity. ... Those who share in the Eucharist must commit themselves to creating peace in our world, which is marked by violence, war and, especially today, by terrorism, economic corruption and sexual exploitation.

The Spirit opens the Christians to anticipate the final gathering of all God’s people into a new creation. “In the Eucharist, then we celebrate the giving of the self to the other and the receiving of the other into the self that the triune God has undertaken in the passion of Christ and that we are called and empowered to live such a giving and receiving out in a conflict-ridden world.”

---

107 Ibid., 130
109 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace, 130
The Eucharistic celebration is the place where the good news of reconciliation is ratified and peace becomes a reality starting from this milieu flowing over to the world at large. Ambassadors of reconciliation are commissioned at this event of communion. These ambassadors of reconciliation will realize that difference does not mean division but an opportunity for communion. Christian mission must help people to recognize that ethnic, cultural, religious and political diversity more than being sources of division should be opportunities where we come to appreciate one another and reaffirm the truth that we need one another as a united family of God.

Men and women of different origins, characters, cultures and religions of origin can together build up unity to a high degree, a unity to the point of laying down one’s life for and with one another for the same person, namely, the God-made-Man, Jesus Christ, who lived among us, shed his Blood for us in the greatest of solidarity and gives us himself as Food in our daily lives. This Blood of Christ shed for us is the bond and foundation of a new fellowship which opposes every hint of tribalism, racism, ethnicity, nepotism, fetishism, etc… Let us insist that the Eucharist remains the source and summit of reconciliation and the entire Christian life and that holiness is the most effective way of building up a society of reconciliation, justice and peace.  

The Eastern Church through the theology of both the Cappadocians and Zizioulas has much to offer to us as regards our relationship with God, others, and creation. A Christian who comes to know God as a mystery of relationship of the three persons of that Godhead becomes one with God, the process known as theosis or divinization in the Eastern Church. “It is a transforming process into which the Christian is invited to enter ever more deeply throughout lifetime.”

This process as we have seen takes place in an ecclesial community through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

3.0 CONCLUSION

---

111 Patricia A. Fox, God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of the Triune God, (Collegeville: Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2001), 246
Zizioulas’ thought which has directed us all through this chapter has not only shown that basing our experience of God on the “Person” of the Father which implies relationality has great significance on the way human beings should relate to others but has also enlightened us to see that the plan of the triune God from the beginning is to unite all creation in God’s self. In other words, this plan of God is liturgical; a celebration of communion between God and the entire creation enacted through human beings especially through the corporate person, Christ. Probably St. Paul sums up the whole trend of thought we are grappling with here as he writes: “In (Christ) him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight, the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ. His purpose he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph 1:7-10). Zizioulas sees in the Eucharist God’s work of embracing the whole creation. “The Eucharist calls man to bring (rapporter) the whole world back to God; it is this offering to God, an anaphora. It follows that the Eucharist is inseparably linked to the proclamation of the word of God which calls man, and through him all creation, to come back (faire retour) to God.”

Every human being becomes the priest in that priesthood of Christ to offer all creation back to God. In this regard the proclamation of the word of God should be set in its Eucharistic focus, that is, it must have its end in building the community and a strong sense of assisting creation to attain its fulfillment in God. “If this were to happen, the Church would truly become a medium for a primary experience of the living God. The believer would come to experience the Church as koinonia and to ‘know’ God as persons in Communion.”

112 Paul McPartlan, The Eucharist makes the Church, 291
113 Patricia A. Fox, God as Communion, 247
Notwithstanding, the idea of becoming as God is, a communion and otherness, the Church will help conflicting communities to rise above their differences to a future where all people will through the Church celebrate differences and turn it into an opportunity for relationality, collaboration, and common union. This will be a formation of a people who will relate to God in whose image they are; who will relate to one another for they are one in Christ; and who will relate to the entire creation as though God were ordering it to himself through them. The Church’s mission should manifest through its life that it is possible for violence and division to give way to forgiveness and reconciliation. The Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation II gives a striking summary as it reads: “in the midst of conflict and division, we know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace. Your Spirit changes our hearts: enemies begin to speak to one another, those who were estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek the way of peace together. Your Spirit is at work when understanding puts an end to strife, when hatred is quenched by mercy and vengeance gives way to forgiveness… fill us with his Spirit through our sharing in this meal… May he take away all that divides us.” The Eucharistic celebration expresses that joy of being reconciled to God’s self as seen in the solidarity, strength, and hope in the eyes of those who come together in communion. What is more positive in Sub-Saharan Africa is that it is at the Eucharistic celebration that we come find the Tutsi and Hutu, Jews and Greeks, Belgians and Rwandese and other factions coming together to a place where all are for a moment disarmed of their hate and united in prayer. What can be more rewarding for the Church than to start its mission of reconciliation from this gathering where the possibility of a reconciled humanity is dimly visible because of the common past? The Church should more than ever seize the moment of the Eucharistic gathering as a more credible sign of hope and a sacrament of love.
for the victims, for those looking at events of Africa from afar and for the oppressors who heighten victimization for their personal ego, if it has to work for genuine reconciliation.

The Eucharist sums up the movement of God’s self offering: “the self-offering of the Father in the gift of the Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relation with the Father.”¹¹⁴ It is necessary to conclude this chapter with the assertion that the mission of reconciliation through justice and peace in Africa involves self-sacrifice because Christian identity is grounded in the life of the triune God in which the whole universe is called to participate. Therefore, the Eucharistic sacrifice has missiological consequences amounting to Christians’ participation in the sacrifice of God.

¹¹⁴ Robert J. Daly, Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice, (New York, T&T Clark, 2009), 5
Chapter Three

In this chapter, we shall reflect on the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Eucharistic real presence in the thought of St. Augustine as a rich insight for reconciliation in conflicting Sub-Saharan Africa. The notion of sacrifice should entail working for communion, solidarity, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation because we share in the life of God who has made self-sacrifice for the reconciliation of humanity to God’s self. Christians have the possibility to achieve reconciliation, not because they are creative, but because this has happened first in the Trinity, through the self-offering of God the Father as he gives his Son to the world and the willing response of the Son, in his humanity, to the Father’s offering. Therefore, Christian sacrifice is a response in communion with Christ to the Father’s self-offering, a sacrifice of reconciliation. The broken body and the blood-shed (sacrifice) are meant for the people, to bring them to communion with God and with one another.

We will come to the conclusion that the real presence of Christ in the species of bread and wine is not the ultimate value in the Eucharist but the unity of the Church brought about in the sacramental commemoration of the passion of Christ, makes Christ really present in the community through the Eucharist. The Eucharistic liturgy brings about reconciliation between God and the participants, so that the participants are charged with a mission of reconciliation of the world to God. In this regard, we want to say that the Eucharist as a ‘sacrifice’ which makes ‘Christ present’ in the lives of the people is a theological paradigm which can help to create communion, solidarity, and heal the wounds of division in Africa. We will demonstrate that the faithful are offered to God in the offering of the gifts of bread and wine which they present to God. Hence, they become the mystery they offer, one body, one Spirit with Christ. In this case (reconciliation) communion in and through the Eucharist is that movement of humankind
towards God so that they are at-one-d in the sacrifice of Christ and they also may be the source of at-one-ment (make all to be one) of all creation with God.

1.0 ST. AUGUSTINE’S EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGY

St. Augustine of Hippo was a son of Patricius, who was a pagan, and of Monica, a devoted Christian to whom he owes his conversion to true Catholicism. He was born in Thagaste in Egypt in 354. In 396, Augustine became the bishop of Hippo. He died in 430 A.D. Having written many philosophical and theological works, the most remarkable ones are The Trinity, The City of God, The Confessions, and The Sermons.

When we talk about St. Augustine’s Eucharistic theology we need to have recourse to his sermons (homilies) 227, 228, 272, addressed to the neophytes on Easter morning. Unlike other pastors of different Churches, Augustine does not present it as a homily but as a simple promise of a gift, an allegorical presentation of instructions just before the neophytes are about to receive their second Eucharist, on the morning of Easter after they were baptized and received the first communion the previous night. He begins from what they perceive now at the altar and what they received the previous night to explain the real presence of Christ in the species of bread and wine. He states in sermon 272, “What you see, then, is bread and a cup. That is what your eyes report to you. But your faith has to be taught that the bread is the body of Christ, the cup the blood of Christ.”115 It must be noted that Augustine has no intention of propounding the doctrine of transubstantiation because this is not an issue in this century. It is a pedagogical way of telling the neophytes that Christ is present in the Eucharist.

---

These material elements they see are the sacrament of Christ. Augustine goes on to say “if, then, you wish to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle as he says to the faithful “you are the body of Christ and his members (1Cor 12:27). If, therefore, you are the body of Christ and his members, your mystery has been placed on the Lord’s Table; you receive your own mystery.” It is interesting to perceive how he moves from the bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ; from the body and blood of Christ to the recipients themselves, that they have actually become Christ in receiving the Eucharist. Augustine is very explicit that by the virtue of receiving the body and blood of Christ the recipient and the Church are changed into Christ himself. This may sound like a more triumphant mentality, saying since the Church is the body of Christ then it is beyond reproach. However, even though it is the body of Christ, it must continually fulfill in history what it is in the eyes of God. The Church must continually remake itself into what it will be in the eschaton. In this mind set each member of the Church is called to witness to what Christ is already doing in his body. Augustine in his exhortation to the neophytes he states:

So if it’s you that are the body of Christ and its members, it is your own 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.

For Augustine, the conduct of a believer makes true the Amen, that is, in their own body they will fulfill what Christ fulfilled in his Paschal Mysteries. More than anything the neophytes through their Amen must be ready to fulfill: “Unity! Verity! Piety! Charity! “One Bread.” The assent to the body of Christ must change them into what the bread is; a unity of many grains. He says in the Confessions that he heard a voice from heaven saying to him that “I am the food of

---

116 Ibid., 95
117 Daniel Sheerin, The Eucharist, 95
118 Ibid., 95
the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me.”119 This is like the famous phrase of Ludwig Feuerbach: “we are what we eat,” but what Augustine meant long before him is that because of the Church’s assimilation into Christ, it is supposed to be Christ to the world, to nourish it, to be broken and given out for humanity. Paramount here is the unity of the Church with Christ and among its members such that Augustine wants to show the neophytes that they belong to a new community, the body of Christ. To clarify the transformation of bread and wine he would make them turn to their own journey of formation and experience of baptism: “you are the same people you were before: nor do you bring new faces before us (here in the assembly). Yet you are brand-new: your old selves on the outside; (but) new by grace of sanctity… something as it were – utterly new.”120 For Augustine the transformation of bread and wine is one element of the mystery while the transformation of the neophytes and the other faithful into what they receive is another part of the mystery.

Augustine is caught by the words of St. Paul in (1Cor 10: 17), ‘we being many are one body.’ “(He) is fascinated by the dual meaning Paul gave to the term body of Christ: On one hand, the people of God and, on the other, the Eucharistic body.”121 He goes on to use the allegory of baking the bread to explain the long journey the neophytes took to reach where they are now, receiving the Eucharist as the climax of the whole period of preparation. They are now the body of Christ through baptism. In all the three Easter sermons of Augustine there is a great sense of union with Christ with the Church and its members.

120 William Harmless, Augustine and the Catechuminate, (Collegeville: Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 1995), 317
121 Ibid., 319
In *The City of God*, Book 10, chapter 6, Augustine presents another teaching on the Eucharist where he looks at the Eucharist as sacrifice. He 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 people’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. 12:1). Commenting on these words of Paul he declares:

The body, then, which, because it is inferior, the soul uses as a servant or instrument, is a sacrifice when it is used rightly and with reference to God. And if this is so, how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice when it directs itself to God so that, inflamed with the fire of love, it may receive his beauty and be pleasing to him… this is the sacrifice of Christians: we being many, we are one body in Christ. And this also, as the faithful know, is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar by which she demonstrates that she herself is offered in the offering that she makes to God.

Here, then, Augustine makes another bold statement about the sacrifice. As he has stated, the mystery that you are, lies on the table; it is your own mystery that you receive; he also says the same thing about the Church as regard sacrifice. It would be like saying the sacrifice that the Church is lies on the altar, it is her own sacrifice that the Church offers. The Church offers herself together with Christ to the Father. Therefore, the Eucharist is the mover of every believer to be Christ and the whole Church towards Christ her head. Augustine states: “Where the head

---

123 Ibid., 400
has gone all of you who are his members will follow.” The Eucharistic sacrifice is the movement of all humanity to Christ and to God.

To sum up St. Augustine’s Eucharistic theology, which forms the foundation of our own thesis which sets the Eucharist as a source of reconciliation through justice and peace: it is necessary not to separate the Eucharistic celebration from the self-offering of God the Father in the gift of his Son, the self-offering response of the Son, in his humanity to the Father in the power of the Spirit and that empowered by the same Spirit Christians are to offer their lives as a sacrifice because they share in the triune life. Therefore, God’s self-offering as experienced in the Paschal Mysteries and Christ’s real presence in the Eucharistic community is an important theological paradigm which can help to create communion, solidarity and heal the wounds of division in Africa.

We conclude with a few cardinal issues in Augustine’s Eucharistic theology. St. Augustine, especially in his Easter sermons, has presented the following issues on the Eucharist: the Eucharist is a sacrifice of communion with Christ, the head, within the Church and with God; in the Eucharistic real presence what is transfigured is not only the bread and wine but the whole community; the Church, through the sacrament of the altar, offers herself in the sacrifice she makes to God; and finally, the Eucharistic sacrifice is the movement of the whole of humanity to God. It is on these issues that this chapter reflects, keeping in mind the implications for the mission of reconciliation that the Eucharist would have in Africa and which is heavily affected by political, economic, and especially ethnic divisions.

2.0 CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE

124 St. Augustine of Hippo, Source: The Roman Catholic Office of readings for the First Sunday of Lent (Commentary on the Psalms Ps. 60, 2-3: CCL 39, 766)
In our contemporary world the word ‘sacrifice’ takes on different meanings and attitudes. It can designate a surrender of something for the sake of something else or it can mean to forego a time of pleasure for the sake of someone or something else. There are now rare occasions where people erect altars to offer gifts to a deity as once happened in many ancient traditional religions. However, in some parts of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, people are not that distant from the time when, in their traditional religions, they offered sacrifices to different supreme beings. In the contemporary world there is much resentment to the use of the term sacrifice because it has been associated with the oppression of women, the poor and the less privileged of our society. William Crockett argues that modern Christians are disadvantaged when they talk of sacrifice because of two reasons.

On one hand, sacrifice, at least as the ancient world understood it, is an almost foreign language to us. The living reality of the ancient sacrificial cultus is not part of our culture. On the other hand, we are heirs of the Reformation controversies over the sacrifice of the Mass, and it is hard for us to read the ancient texts without importing that history back into the literature.\(^\text{125}\)

Unlike in our modern world, ancient religious cultures held in high esteem the idea that sacrifices were means to relate to their deities. Sacrifices were offered for many reasons and this is what renders the definition of sacrifice difficult. Some sacrifices were offered as gifts (gift-sacrifices), others for forgiveness (sin-sacrifices) and others were for communion (communion-sacrifices). At this point it is important to start with the consideration of the practice of sacrifice in ancient Israel. Crockett identifies four main forms of sacrifices; gift-sacrifices, communion-sacrifices, sin-offerings and in a special way the Passover meal as sacrifice.

2.1 Gift-Sacrifices

In this form of sacrifices the victims are animals, vegetables or cereals. The best example of gift-offerings is the holocaust fully consumed in fire. The animal, vegetables or cereals were consumed in the fire. This form of sacrifice was offered in memory of what God had done for his people as a form of thanksgiving. It was not a paying back for what God had done for them since the Jews believed that everything already came from God as a gift. “According to Israelite faith, Yahweh is sovereign over all creation. Nothing could be offered to God that had not already been received as gift. The gift-offering, therefore, was essentially a sacrifice of thanksgiving.”

2.2 Communion-Sacrifices

The purpose of communion-sacrifices was to praise and to thank God. The major difference with gift-offerings was that only part of the victim was consumed in fire while the rest was eaten by the people. Crockett says “communion-sacrifices were also sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, but they also gave particular expression to the covenant relationship with Yahweh as well as expressing joyful fellowship among the worshippers.”

It is important to understand the connection between the food consumed in the fire (sacrificed to given to God) and the remainder eaten by people (not sacrificed) would already presuppose communion between God and humans through eating of the same food. These sacrifices were marked by great jubilation in honor of the covenant that Yahweh had specially made with his people, which was to acknowledge and appreciate Yahweh’s election of their community.

2.3 Sin-Offerings

Communion-sacrifices and gift sacrifices were the principle forms of sacrifice but as we have said above, sacrifices in all religions are offered for different reasons. When Israel began to

---

126 Ibid., 63
127 Ibid., 66
develop a consciousness of sin through the failure to keep the covenant with God, she began to appropriate other forms of sacrifices to amend this failure caused by infidelity to the covenant. This failure comprises of moral guilt and any kind of impurity which breaks the good relationship with God. “The Sin-offerings, like the communion-sacrifices and holocausts (Gift-Sacrifices), were animal sacrifices, but particular importance was attached to the blood ritual associated with them, blood understood as a means of atonement.”128 Through this form of sacrifice their sins were washed away by the outpouring of the victim’s blood, thereby, reconciling themselves to God by repairing the broken relationship. In other words, it is a sacrifice which makes the participants one with God; a sacrifice of at-one-ment with God and neighbor. In this way the Eucharist sacrifice also refers to the forgiving or pardoning of sin through the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion, which made possible the reconciliation between God and creation. Therefore, those who have been at-one-d with God in the Eucharist are called to be a source of at-one-ment with the rest of creation.

2.4 Passover

Passover and the eating of the Paschal Lamb became a separate event in Jewish worship as it became more of a memorial sacrifice of what God had done for their ancestors in Egypt at the time of the first Passover. “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year old male… this is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is the Passover of the Lord” (Ex 12:5, 11). This became the model of all later Jewish sacrificial meals. Kabasele Lumbala sees the Passover meal as the foundation of what Jesus did and what Christians will be doing in celebrating the achievement of salvation in Christ’s own life and work. He outlines three moments:

128 Ibid., 64
First, there is entrance. Participants wash their hands (rite of purification); they recline; and a cup of wine is brought forward; the president or the head of the family receives it and pronounces the blessing: ‘Holy are you, our God, king of all ages, who has given us this fruit of the vine. He drunk…Second, the meal is preceded by the breaking of the bread. Before anyone eats, the presider or the head of the family takes the bread, pronounces the blessing, breaks it, and gives it to the guests. The blessing is stated in these terms: ‘Blessed are you, our God, king of all ages, you who have brought forth bread from the earth.’ Third, there is a ritual revolving around ‘the cup of blessing.’ The final courses are served, and before the end of the meal a cup is brought to the one presiding. The person takes the cup, elevates it slowly, and pronounces a triple blessing: the first resembles the preceding ones; the second begins with ‘we offer you praise…’ and God is thanked for all his wonders throughout salvation history; the third is a series of requests: ‘have pity… feed your people… sustain your people… that your reign may be without…’

From this meal we can perceive the form of what Jesus did during the Last Supper meal and what the early Christians commemorated. It is for this reason that we see that the Eucharistic rite in the first two centuries was centered on the rites of bread and wine, prayers of praise and thanksgiving, for the salvation God wrought in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the first three forms of sacrifice we see the emphasis laid on the destruction of the victim by fire. It is only in the Passover sacrifice that we do not see the destruction of the victim. If the Council of Trent’s understanding of sacrifice of the Mass is based on the Passover meal, Daly believes that its definition of sacrifice has missed the point because it emphasized the destruction of the victim. He quotes the definition of sacrifice given at the Council of Trent:

Sacrifice is a gift presented to God in a ceremony in which the gift is destroyed or consumed. It symbolizes the internal offering of commitment and surrender to God. The purpose is primarily for the offerers to acknowledge the dominion of God, but also to bring about the reconciliation of themselves (and possibly others) with God, to render thanks for blessings received, and to petition for further blessings for oneself and others.

This definition if applied to sacrifices in other traditional religions suffices, but when applied to the Eucharist it is highly inadequate because it becomes unreasonable to talk of the sacrifice of Christ to be present in the Mass since Christ is now glorified and beyond suffering and death.

---

129 François Kabasele Lumbala, *Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation*, (New York, Orbis Books, 1998), 21
130 Robert Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited: Trinitarian and Liturgical Perspectives*, Theological Studies, Vol. 64 No.1, March 2003, 25
Daly argues that Christian sacrifice only makes sense if it is viewed from a trinitarian perspective. That is to say it must be viewed primarily from what God has done in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. He attests that sacrifice begins, not with human, but with divine activity.

Sacrifice is not, in the first place, an activity of human beings directed to God and, in the second place, something that reaches its goal in the response of divine acceptance and bestowal of divine blessing on the cultic community. Rather, sacrifice in the New Testament understanding—and thus in its Christian understanding—is, in the first place, the self-offering of the Father in the gift of his Son, and in the second place the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father, and in the third place, the self-offering of believers in union with Christ by which they share in his covenant relation with the Father.... The radical self-offering of the faithful is the only spiritual response that constitutes an authentic sacrificial act...

St. Paul exhorts the community of believers in Rome in these words: “I urge you therefore, brothers/sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). Understood in the realm of the trinitarian theology the Mass or Eucharistic celebration becomes a true sacrifice which manifests the mercy and love which moves God to unite his people with him. Therefore, “the originating reality of sacrifice is not just the initiative of the Father, but the Father's self-offering initiative in the gift of his Son whose "response," in turn, is also a self-offering.” The Church in its Eucharistic liturgies thanks God for all his gifts, especially those manifested in the Paschal Mysteries of Christ and the gift of the Spirit which sanctifies the bread and wine and the entire assembly and makes them into the real body of Christ. This body of Christ is not fulfilled by the presence of those in the celebration but only when all the people of God i.e. the human family, become the true body of Christ.

3.0 REAL PRESENCE

131 Robert Daly, Sacrifice Unveiled or Sacrifice Revisited, 27
132 Ibid., 28
When Augustine speaks of ‘real presence’ of Christ, he does not have in mind the doctrine of transubstantiation which is the preoccupation of the scholastic theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas. It is for this reason that we will not define real presence with the medieval categories. In sermon 227, Augustine declares that through the word spoken over the species of bread and wine Christ becomes present in them. “The bread which you see on the altar, once it is sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ and that the chalice, or rather what the chalice contains, once it is sanctified by the word of God, is blood of Christ.”

Augustine’s formulation faces a number of critics when he begins to use the words like figure, sign and sacrament of Christ to talk about the real presence, which leaves some people feeling that Christ is only symbolically present in the bread and wine. To understand Augustine very well is to place the real presence in the context of the Church because Augustine is consumed by the words of St. Paul: “you are the body of Christ and his members (1Cor 12:27). And thus, if you are the body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery which has been placed on the altar of the Lord; you receive you own mystery.”

He is more preoccupied with the concept of the Church and the faithful who are receiving the mystery of Christ’s body and blood than with the doctrine of the real presence. Joseph Powers understands Augustine as highly centered on the body of Christ, the Church: “in other words the real presence is not the ultimate value in the Eucharist. The ultimate value of this presence is the unity of the Church brought about in the sacramental commemoration of the passion of Christ in the reception of Christ under the species of bread and wine.”

---

133 William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechuminate*, 317
134 ibid., 318
In this way Augustine escapes the difficulties that will come in focusing Eucharistic theology primarily on transubstantiation as it will happen in the medieval period. St. Thomas Aquinas, will fall into difficulties when he talks of the bread and wine being transformed into body and blood. Aquinas will use Aristotelian categories of *substance* and *accident* to explain how one would not receive less of Christ when one receives a half piece of the bread and another receives two pieces, or Christ being imprisoned in the tabernacles by saying that the bread and wine are accidents which remain after the change but the substance is Christ. He realizes that by all means these categories will be found wanting in front of this mystery. His final and wise reflection was to say transubstantiation must be accepted by faith and not through proving it rationally. We should have in mind the controversy of Berengar in 1059 who questioned the real presence of Christ in the species that since Christ is already in heaven as king and Lord how would he come back to dwell in the elements on the altar? “The heresy of Berengarius had created a real traumatism in the Church in the 11th century. To avoid all risks of relapse in this direction, the scholastics started emphasizing the link between the Eucharistic body of Christ and his historical and glorified body so strongly that they came to the point of loosening the link between this same Eucharistic body and the ecclesial body of Christ, the link which had been strongly highlighted in the former times by the Fathers.”

Henceforth, Church unity which was at the heart of the Eucharistic sacrament is weakened. The consequence of this change is that the centrality of the Church as regards the sacrament of the Eucharist is highly weakened as well.

4.0 EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE IN AFRICA

Despite the long tradition of Christianity in North Africa, most of African Christianity is less than 200 years old. We are excited with the insight of Rev. Joseph Galgalo, in his 2001 seminar paper, especially in the section where he reflects on contextual theology. He outlines three necessary considerations for doing contextual theology:

The early Eucharist evolved into becoming a ‘functional equivalent’ replacing the traditional sacrifices. As a ritual power, it played a key role in the definitive process that saw Christianity evolve into a distinct and viable religious entity; it provided a ritual dimension in the Christian’s building of a semiotic system, which without it the Gentile Christians with no ritual alternative would have found it very difficult to make it a spiritual home; and as a ritual force, Eucharist met an intrinsic human need for communion with the divine, as well as providing them with a hermeneutical key to interpret the reality of God’s salvation.¹³⁷

If we are to talk about sacrifice in Africa, we have to keep in mind the religious practices of sacrifice that happened and are still happening in some sections of Africa. Sacrifices in Africa were meant to be first of all worship of God, thanksgiving for the abundance of crops and animals that had increased, asking for forgiveness from God through the mediation of the ancestors, and a means of creating communion between God and the people and above all among the people themselves in the community.

All these types of offerings had stipulated forms of ritual, dance, and taboos. The human body is the central symbol of worship such that its union with what is going on is indispensable. James Amanze in his study on forms of offerings made by the Chewa ethnic group of Malawi cites the main categories of sacrifices for the following reasons: “Offerings as means of confession of sins, offerings as means of fellowship with God and one another, and offerings as a gift of thanksgiving.”¹³⁸ Let us briefly evaluate these forms of offerings and we will later understand how the African practice of sacrifice appeals more to the people as regards the

meaning of Christian Eucharistic sacrifice. It is necessary to pay attention to the symbols used because humans are by nature sacramental beings

4.1 Offerings for sins

Among the Chewa there is always a strong sense of awareness of sin and there is usually a form of public confession of sin. Amanze writes that “God is considered absolutely holy; he hates sin and is swift to punish the sins of man. The ancestral spirits, in their priestly role, are thought to have a higher moral standing than man because of their proximity to God. They are in fact called *aku-mlungu* (those who are close to God).”\(^{139}\) The idea is that, the ancestors having been released from this material world are more perfect morally because they are close to God. Therefore, they can mediate the process of reconciliation on both sides between God and the people and among the people themselves. It is remarkable that in many African Eucharistic celebrations there is always an invocation of the ancestor during the penitential rite. Sin offerings are made when there are clear signs that the social order has been broken through sin. The signs are drought, disease, famine, recurring deaths and other social disasters. In this case the sacrifice is for communion and reconciliation with God and with one another as the only way to restore the broken harmony.

4.2 Offerings as a Means of Fellowship with God and One Another

These forms of offerings are not greatly separated from those of sin-offering because the reason for this type of offering is the imbalance caused by the broken relationships as a result of misconduct which calls for repentance and reparation for the wrong done.

\(^{139}\) *Ibid.*, 117.
To achieve this, the Chewa people make offerings to the deity in order to establish right relationship with God thus establishing communion between the spirit world and the physical world. In the process, social solidarity is enhanced as people go about regulating abnormalities in the society which are believed to cause tensions between the spirit world (ancestors and God who is considered as the greatest spirit) and the physical world.\footnote{Ibid., 118}

The greatest form of social communion is expressed by having every worshipper contribute foodstuffs towards the sacrifice. It involves everyone and it cannot be done if there is not a good level of communion and it is for this reason that the preparation takes a considerable period of time in order to make sure that the desired fellowship is achieved by the community before the offering is made.

4.3 Offerings as a Gift of Thanksgiving

Each passing year there was an offering to God through the intercession of the ancestors for all that had been produced that year on their farms and the multiplication of animals in kraals which they believe came from God as gift. For this reason it was forbidden that the people could not eat of the first-fruits of their produce before they make this offering to God both as gift and thanksgiving. However, it must be noted that the gift offering had a utilitarian purpose. Although it recognized that everything comes from God, it did not have the Jewish understanding that you cannot bribe God to give more if you give him these gifts. Since the Jews believed that you cannot give to God anything that he has not given already to them as gift; for the Jews, sacrificial offering was only that of thanksgiving to God: “How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me? The cup of salvation I will raise … a thanksgiving sacrifice I make I will call on the Lords name” (Ps 115).

In all these three forms of offerings it important to see how sacrifice is at the heart of every religion. It is interesting to note that the idea of offering gifts which were special in most
of the sacrifices now happens at Mass using the same gifts which were used in traditional
sacrifices. These were gifts like cola nuts, doves, chicken, goats, sheep and cows, and foodstuffs
as a gesture which acknowledges that all comes from the hand of God. Consequently, when it
comes to talking about the Eucharist as sacrifice in Africa, it entails everything that sacrifice
connotes in the traditional society: communion with God through the intercession of the
ancestors and with one another. Every sacrifice bound the people to a moral obligation.
Sometimes these sacrifices were performed as a remedy for some moral breach which had taken
place in the community.

Most Sub-Saharan communities are organized in ethnic and clan groupings. These
groupings affect the way the people think of crime, punishment and reconciliation. The Chewa,
whom we have mentioned above there is a saying, “kalikokha nkanyama tiri tiwiri ntianthu” (he
who is alone is an animal but when there are two they are human beings). The same echoes in the
famous quote of John Mbiti, “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.”[141]
Therefore, whatever affects an individual affects the community and vice versa. This deep sense
of togetherness and solidarity comes out clearly in all the activities of the community and
individualism is synonymous with witchcraft.

5.0 IMPORTAMCE OF COMMUNION IN AFRICAN WORSHIP

The greatest aspect of communion is ratified in eating together especially eating from one
dish and drinking from one cup. “In Africa, commensality brings together the living and the
dead. Traditional Africans washed their hands in the same bowl, ate from the same large dish and
drank from one pot... a meal brings the past, the present and the future together in the actual

moment.” The Eucharistic celebration expresses togetherness, solidarity and commensality which we have already seen in the African communities. The commensality which developed in the ethnic groups or clans and which is manifested in the Eucharistic celebration should be extended to the larger social gathering of all believers who come together for Mass. Again Golgalo declares that in early Christianity “the Eucharist evolved from a social meal into a central rite of their worship, fulfilling an essential role in the divine-human relationship. It provided a functional equivalent to the traditional sacrifices… the believers were convinced that the Eucharistic sacrifice did not only ‘replace’ the traditional sacrifices, but had more efficient ‘ritual power’ because of its relationship to the ultimate sacrifice.”

The first thing that catches the eye in African liturgies is the sense of mystery expressed in ritual, rhythm, dance and the environment. Music is a very important element of the African Eucharistic sacrifices because it unites everyone in dance, a union of bodies swaying, jumping and shaking rhythmically. “In Africa, in particular, it is characteristic to believe that the world is well-created and beats with a certain rhythm. Therefore, humans must synchronize themselves with this rhythm. This is the principle role of dance. One dances with joy (cyanga), as certainly as one dance in pain; one dances love as certainly as one dances anger and hatred (disempela, as they call it in ciluba language)...the body necessarily forms part of prayer.” The Eucharistic liturgy not only creates this unity among the worshippers but also creates union with (Christ) the corporate person. In the Eucharistic liturgy in Africa, one seeks, through song and dance, union between body and spirit, harmony between the members and the community at prayer as well as with the spirit of God.

143 Joseph Golgalo, Some Theological Development of the Earliest Eucharist, 3
144 François Kabasele Lumbala, Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa, 25
The impact of the Eucharistic rituals in Africa would be communion, solidarity and fellowship among the worshippers. David Power argues that “ritual of any sort, when they function well, allow participants to find their place in the world that they inhabit and to relate their felt experience to a greater whole. Even in an alien society the ritual group finds a way to secure its own identity by way of contrast with prevailing culture.”\textsuperscript{145} This is why rituals of African sacrifices broke into the Eucharistic celebrations before anyone knew it. For example, the ritual of invocation of the ancestors, the whole idea here is that through ritual the invisible or transcendent world breaks forth into or faces the visible world. Christian mission, which is primarily that of reconciliation, is a liturgy which starts in and goes beyond the celebrating community to synchronize with the whole universe in God’s own ritual of self-offering. Despite the differences in ritual and symbols between African and Western Eucharistic celebrations, the message is essentially about new life in Christ and the reconciliation he makes happen. In the Eucharistic liturgies, history and the eschaton embrace, the human and the divine unite, hence making it a better place for forgiveness and reconciliation. Moreover, reconciliation presupposes that our Eucharistic union should transcend our earth bound affinities which are grounded in biological, political, economic and national identities to a more trinitarian identity.

6.0 EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE THAT MAKES CHRIST PRESENT

As we have mentioned that after Berengar’s controversy the scholastic theology left out emphasis on the ecclesial body and only remained in the 13\textsuperscript{th} century with the historical/glorified body and the sacramental body in the affirmation of the ‘real presence’ of Christ in the bread and wine. This strong affirmation of the real presence to counter Berengar and his sympathizers destroyed the necessity of the ecclesial body from where the sacramental body springs. Chauvet

\textsuperscript{145} David Power, \textit{The Eucharistic Mystery: Revitalizing the Tradition}, (New York, Crossroad, 1992), 17
points out three risks of this separation: “Seeing real presence in a imaginary way… enclosing it in a metaphysics of ‘substance’ which ignores the supreme importance of its relation to humanity (the ‘for you’ of Jesus’ words at the Last Supper, therefore a relation and not the simple, bare fact of ‘being there’), and reinforcing individualistic tendencies which effectively will continue to grow.”

Let us focus on the idea of the sacramental body being ‘for you,’ which requires the presence of the recipients for whom this sacramental body is given; it entails self-sacrifice offered by Jesus.

Jesus is giving his body for the life of the disciples and all those who will come to believe in him through their testimony. Jesus is actually offering himself for the disciples. The dichotomy brought to birth by leaving out the ‘for you’ will remain and grow, and will enter in the formulations of Trent. The ‘for you’ is very strong in Paul because for him it is absurd to honor the Eucharistic body if one does not respect the ecclesial body, there is need for unity in the community especially with the poor not just to yield to the realism of the Eucharistic body. He will tell the Corinthians that if they eat the Lord’s Supper while divided, it is not the Lord’s Supper they are eating but condemnation...“for all who eat without discerning the body (Church), eat and drink judgment against themselves” (1Cor 11:29).

Moreover, it is true that the council of Trent remained ‘up to the end prisoner’ of the ‘dualistic problematic’ separating the ‘sacrament’ (real presence) 1551 from the ‘sacrifice’ (propitiatory effectiveness of the mass) 1563, it was difficult for it to think of the Eucharistic presence of Christ as ‘being-for,’ because this ‘being-for’ is the expression of the sacrificial gift which he made of his life; and it was difficult for it to simultaneously think the Eucharist in its intrinsic report to the Church. 147

Therefore, the real presence of Christ must be set in the context of the community, wherein Christ as the head is offered together with his members. Consequently, drawing from this rich

---

147 Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Broken Body as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence*, 251
tradition of the Fathers we can speak about reconciliation among the different factions that are so evident on the African continent. Where there is no genuine communion, solidarity, and fellowship, commensality in the Eucharist is a mockery to the Christian tradition of the Eucharist outlined for us in St. Paul and St. Augustine.

7.0 REAL PRESENCE, AS A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE IN AFRICA

7.1 A Transforming Presence

In order to talk about reconciliation and peace in Africa in relation to the Eucharist, as sacrifice, one must turn to the implications of the African traditional sacrifices which presupposed the making of peace between the members, who were in discord and also communion with the spirit world, with God as the supreme spirit and the worshipping of God from whom all good things come. All the rituals in these sacrifices were leading to this need of communion and peace between the physical world and the spiritual world but above all among those dwelling in the physical world.

In the Eucharistic celebration there are two rituals which capture the imagination of what we are talking about: the elevation of the body and blood of Christ at the end of the Eucharistic prayer which is very vivid, and the breaking of bread which comes in silence immediately after the sign of peace and before communion. The elevation is born from the need to emphasize that Christ now dwells in the elements, a fruit of Berengar’s heresy of denying Christ’s real presence in the elements. It is a ritual that would appear to denote ‘the bare being there’ of Christ in bread and wine; the bread and not the bread, proper to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Rather, the transformation of the elements alone without the transformation of the Church itself into the body of Christ is not the true meaning of the Eucharist.
7.2 A Presence that Makes for Unity and Peace

On the other hand, the breaking of the bread which should be ‘for you’ denotes the sacrificial aspect of the Father’s self-offering of his Son and Christ’s self-offering response to the Father, hence the Mass is a sacrifice of the community which responds to God’s love. The breaking of the bread is not done during the institution narrative which could be the natural place as the priest says ‘he broke the bread,’ which could have been mimicking what Jesus did, but it is done between the sign of peace and communion (for us this is the real meaning of the real presence of Christ; peace and communion, drawing from Augustine’s assertion), which saves the theology of the priest acting in the ‘name of the Church’ or in the ‘name of Christ’ rather than in the ‘person of Christ.’ Moreover, it allows us to say that the rite of breaking the bread is a rite of communion with God and the Church. Chauvet states “the fundamental sacramentum (outward sign of a more important spiritual reality) of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is the ‘bread,’ but broken (or destined to be broken). As such, the bread, in its essential being of the bread, is not as closed and compact thing, but as a reality-for-sharing.”\textsuperscript{148} This is what Augustine would say that the Eucharistic presence is for the Church and the fellowship of its members. For him, the mystery of the Eucharistic presence had to do with the ‘Whole Christ;’ body and head. Therefore, in his language the res (invisible reality) is this total Christ, the Church that is united to the head as he says ‘be what you see and receive what you are.’

7.3 The kiss of peace

Historical/Liturgical theology has revealed that both in the East and the West, exist the rite of the “Kiss of Peace” during the Eucharistic celebration. The point is that peace is the

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 260
prerequisite and the fruit of every celebration of the Eucharist. It is clear that in the first few centuries of Christianity the making of peace or reconciliation was a necessary element of every Eucharistic celebration. For example, the Didache, chapter 14 insists on the reconciliation among Christians before offering the sacrifice.

Come together on the dominical day of the Lord, break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. Anyone who has a quarrel with his fellow should not gather with you until he has been reconciled, lest your sacrifice be profaned. For this is the sacrifice of which the Lord says: “In every place and at every time offer me a pure sacrifice, for I am a great king.” says the Lord, “and my name is marvelous among the nations.”

In the East the ritual of peace (Kiss of Peace) comes between the intercessions and the bringing of the gifts to the altar as a conclusion of the liturgy of the word as well as marking the beginning of the liturgy of the bread and wine. Paul Bradshaw argues that the exchange of a kiss has its origin in the Greco-Roman world, and it was limited to very close friends and family members. He writes: “the symbol of kissing other Christians in the liturgical context when Church members were not so related was ‘a powerful counter-cultural symbol,’ implying the sort of intimate link of brothers and sister in Christ which would have been considered scandalous by those outside the Church.”

Drawing from this powerful symbol we argue that reconciliation in the celebration of the Eucharist with those who are not intimate to us; in this case those who are different from us, even including those we consider to be our enemies becomes an imperative.

On the other hand, the rite of the breaking of the bread is the sealing of the process of unity between Christ and his members, and communion (reconciliation) among the believers. In fact the rite of the breaking of the bread in the Eucharistic liturgy is sandwiched by the kiss of peace and communion. St. Augustine rightly remarked that the kiss of charity is a good preparation for communion. It is here that we find the sacrament of the Eucharist embracing with

---

150 Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, (London, SPCK, 2004), 75
the sacrament of reconciliation or put bluntly the sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament of reconciliation. The kiss of peace, the breaking of the bread and communion are inseparably linked in the process of reconciliation that take place in the entire celebration.

The first gesture, the one of exchanging peace, is primarily centered on the second dimension: the people welcome each other there as brother and sister; but they do so ‘in the charity of Christ.’ The third, the one of communion, is to the contrary centered on the first dimension: it is indeed the risen Christ (and not the brother/sister or the Church) who is received there, but one cannot do this in truth without having received each other before hand as brother/sister.\footnote{Louis-Marie Chauvet, \textit{The Broken Body as Theological Figure of Eucharistic Presence}, 261}

This cannot happen without a prior knowledge of being forgiven and praying for forgiveness. It is very important that all these rituals are preceded by the Lord’s Prayer, a prayer for the forgiveness of sin: God forgiving the people and in the same way the people forgiving one another. Therefore, Christ is the reason for peace because he has given himself for the peace of the world and in turn he calls on all the disciples to embrace peace as he says ‘peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you (Jn 14:27). This peace comes from the ability to forgive. Christ said to his disciples: “Peace be with you … those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven” (Jn 20:21, 23). As in the traditional African sacrifices, where peace, communion and solidarity with God and neighbor were the ends of every form of sacrifice, so is the Eucharist. A special insistence must be made concerning African sacrifices that the community peace, brother/sisterhood, moral conduct and restoration of the wrongdoer were at the root of their offerings. Moreover, there is no meaningful celebration of the Eucharist without reconciliation.

7.4 Receive your own mystery and become what you receive

Having talked about the acute sense of solidarity and community life in African sacrifices it must be noted that in most cases the family, clan and ethnic affiliation became barriers to communication with people of other families, clans, ethnic groups. This is very evident in a
number of ethnic clashes, political affiliation to one’s own ethnic group, nepotism and tribalism. Most of the wars waged in Africa are between different ethnic communities manipulated by the political opportunists who find chances to do so from divisions created by unbridled ethnic pride. Moreover, communion and reconciliation should not only be relegated to the harmony of the clan, tribe and ethnic community but it must be inclusive of others because by being Christian we have crossed the threshold of these boundaries to become new creatures in Christ.

Inasmuch as it was unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the entire community, now more than ever, we see greater divisions even after the celebration of the Eucharistic feast. There are cases where a pastor is not accepted by a particular parish because he does not belong to the ethnic grouping dominant in the parish. Again, echoing John Paul II, how these divisions are tearing Africa into poverty. He quotes the bishops:

For some decades now Africa has been the theatre of fratricidal wars which are decimating peoples and destroying their natural and cultural resources.” This very sad situation, in addition to causes external to Africa, also has internal causes such as “tribalism, nepotism, racism, religious intolerance and the thirst for power taken to the extreme by totalitarian regimes which trample with impunity the rights and dignity of the person.152

The challenge for the Church in Africa is to heal these divisions. Augustinian Eucharistic theology has much to tell us in this regard, such that to kill, to segregate, to impoverish, and to dehumanize a member of the Church is to kill, segregate, impoverish, and dehumanize your own mystery. This is bad enough but more so some of these divisions and atrocities are perpetrated by some Christians themselves. “The Christian sacrifice unites us both to each other and to God in the body of Christ, so that we become what is offered on the altar.”153 There will be no meaning whatsoever if the Eucharistic mystery of the real presence is not understood in relation to ‘be for’

152 John Paul II, Ecclesia in Africa: (Nairobi, Paulines Publications, 1994) No. 117
the unity of the Church. The unity of members of the Church and also the unity with other faith groups is still a difficult reality in our days. The African forms of sacrifice as outlined above show a new insight that it is not only the union of the whole community but also the union and reconciliation of the individual members with one another. Therefore, to understand the real presence of Christ as being brought solely by the act of consecration destroys the other meaning that Christ is already present in the celebration to cause change in the elements and in the people.

8.0 CONCLUSION

In reflecting on St. Augustine’s theology of the Eucharist which emphasizes that in the Eucharistic real presence what is transfigured is not only the bread and wine but the whole community; that the Church, through the sacrament of the altar, offers herself in the sacrifice she makes to God; then, it becomes an imperative that the Eucharistic sacrifice should be a ritual of embrace with those who are not like us. This transformation opens us to accept in our own bodies those who are considered enemies because by sharing in the same Eucharist with them they have become with us the one body of Christ. Therefore, we conclude that this multiple transformation must be the paradigm for the transformation of African societies which are marked with division, hate, and violence. The ritual or symbol of breaking bread and sharing it in the community of faith should be a response to the fact that God the Father, in the Son, has given God’s self to humanity, and in turn, as a spiritual response, humanity gives itself to Christ and to one another cordially. This communion in Christ is not just for mutual adoration of each other but for establishing the reign of God on earth; healing wounds of division between ethnic, clans, families and nations in Africa. Hence, to receive the Eucharist is to receive one’s own self, that is, Christ, other members, and including enemies in the celebrating community. The Eucharist is
already our own mystery but we must grow day by day to the full stature of this mystery by becoming ourselves the mystery of God’s reconciliation.

Finally, the link between sacrifice and real presence is so paramount that to lose the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist is not only to lose the commitment to transform and bridge divisions which are created between the Church (ecclesial body), Eucharistic (sacramental) body, and historical/glorious body of Christ. “In a more concrete way, this means that Eucharistic communion demands that the Church and individual Christians give to the risen Christ a body of humanity and history, a body which may keep his presence in the middle of the world by keeping his memory alive.” 154 These notions of sacrifice and real presence provide a functional equivalency in the Eucharist of what is lost through cessation of traditional sacrifices; communion, moral order, worship, solidarity, and brother/sisterhood of all the members which in the Eucharistic celebration would be enhanced beyond the boundaries of ethnic grouping to a wide spectrum.

9.0 GENERAL CONCLUDING THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The reflections in this thesis have shown us that we need to realize that we cannot think of reconciliation without the realization of Africa’s common participation in sinful social structures in which sin exists and is nurtured. Secondly, the life of the triune God is a relationship of persons who are distinct and yet constitutive of one another. We have also come to appreciate that this difference of persons is an opportunity for communion and not division. Consequently, the life of the triune God is both a challenge and an invitation to Eucharistic

---

154 Louis Marie Chauvet, The Sacraments: The word of God at the Mercy of the Body, 137
communities in Africa to rise above their differences which are caused by ethnic, political, economic and religious differences. The second synod for Africa states:

The Church, as servant of reconciliation, has the mission of reconciling all things in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). In carrying out this mission, the Church acknowledges and respects the rich ethnic, cultural, political and religious diversities of the African peoples by seeking a unity in diversity, rather than in uniformity, by emphasizing what unifies, rather than what divides them and by tapping the positive values of these diversities as a source of strength to forge social harmony, peace and progress.\(^{155}\)

Rooted in the life of the Trinity, the Church in Africa should be a Church of communion, reconciliation, justice and peace. It will inspire men and women in its eschatological being “to communion, celebrating the presence of the Lord in her Eucharist and her sacramental life and living the joyful and hopeful expectation of the Lord’s coming, brings the people of God to the margins of eternity.”\(^{156}\) It is a Church which will recognize the centrality of Christ but Christ as the second person of the Trinity because a theology which forgets this fact ends up destroying the relational character of the Godhead on which Christian identity is modeled. The self-offering of believers in union with Christ, by which they share in his covenant relation with the Father, is a liturgical response to the self-sacrifice of God the Father in the gift of his Son, the unique response of the Son in his humanity to the Father through which God is reconciling everything to God’s self. Therefore, at the heart of genuine Christian witness is the mission of reconciliation since it is God’s mission to unite all things in Christ.

Setting the mission of reconciliation through justice and peace within the Eucharistic context has several advantages and implications. First, we cannot conceive of the Last Supper without the experience of conflict. Jesus is in conflict with the leaders because of his teaching and probably because he does not belong to the inner circle which bears the leadership mantle.

\(^{155}\) Synod for Africa, Penultimate Act, *The Final Propositions*, Proposition No. 32

Although this conflict was from outside his circle of direct influence, we find conflict within the community of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus knew that one of his disciples was going to betray him. The Last Supper brings the memory of all the conflicts which Israel had suffered beginning with the Passover in Egypt, the conflict of slavery, and turning to Jerusalem there are both religious and political conflicts. Jesus, in the supper, as he has done before with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners makes it a parable of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Last Supper is a feast which calls for the embrace of enemies who know they are in conflicts, because the table is set in the presence of enemies. Thomas Porter points out that “the Last Supper meal is a meal in the midst of conflict where Jesus names the conflict in the room, and then gives bread, the gift of forgiveness, not a stone, or retribution or punishment.”¹⁵⁷ Jesus’ action shows that conflict must be openly named during the Eucharistic meal; “one of you will betray me” (Mt 14:18). He also names the social conflict in his act of washing the feet of the disciples and shows them that greatness lies in washing one another’s feet and not in lording it over others. As if this was not enough, he also names the denial and abandonment that he will experience at the hands of his own; “Amen, I say to you, this very night … you will deny me three times” (Mt 26:34). More important in African Eucharistic liturgies should be the naming of conflicts and show that these can be surmounted through genuine conversation at the table of the Lord. This genuine telling of stories will bring the offenders and the offended to the origin of the hurt and together make resolutions not to let the harm repeat itself. It is very important here to mention that the Eucharistic liturgy is a memory, and not a pleasant memory for that matter, the memory of suffering, death and resurrection. Memory is essential because it forms the human identity. Violence in Africa is based on bad memories of others from the past. There cannot be genuine

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Porter, The Last Supper: Naming the Conflict and Giving Bread and Wine, in Conflict and Communion: Reconciliation and Restorative Justice at Christ’s Table, (Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 2006), 18
reconciliation without remembering together the past and be ready to heal it through forgiveness. It is only forgiveness which has the power to transform the past. Interestingly, this is what the Eucharist entails, a celebration of forgiveness which opens up a common future with God and with former enemies.

It must be noted that acts of vengeance and retribution reflect legitimate concern for justice as John De Gruchy rightly puts it that they “are sounds of fury, an expression of righteous anger against those who undermined or destroyed human life and social well being.” However, this understood biblically points us back to the fact that vengeance ultimately belongs to God (Duet. 32:35). God’s vengeance or anger is directed at evil more than towards the evildoer. Therefore, the true meaning of justice and forgiveness in the process of reconciliation is that the evil must be sought and uprooted rather than just punishing the offender. Moreover, the offended has the key to unlock the spiral of violence through forgiveness for this is what God has shown in the Paschal (Eucharistic) Mystery. Consequently, the mission of the Church, from the Eucharistic table, must be a holy vengeance against evil in order to save both the victim and the victimizer.

The Church should facilitate the development of the culture of reconciliation which will help both Christians and non-Christians to seek ways of peace, solidarity and communion together. The African Synod Fathers in Proposition 8 indicate that a way to create this culture is by holding yearly celebrations of reconciliation both at both local Church level and at the continental level.

A Reconciliation Day or Week every year, especially in Advent and Lent, or a Year of Reconciliation on the continental level, to ask God for special pardon for all hurts and wounds

---

inflicted upon each other and to reconcile offended persons and groups within the Church and the wider community.\textsuperscript{159}

The bishops also proposed an extraordinary Jubilee Year in which the Church in Africa and its Islands would give thanks together with the universal Church and pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This period of reconciliation should be marked by the following: “personal conversion and individual sacramental confession and absolution; a continental Eucharistic Congress; the celebration of the rites of reconciliation in which people forgive each other; renewal of baptismal promises, in which being disciples of Jesus supersedes all other forms of allegiance to clan or political party; and a renewed Eucharistic life.”\textsuperscript{160} The Eucharistic life for us becomes the best way forward in the pursuit of reconciliation because every Eucharistic community must be a basic neighborhood center for reconciliation. The bishops join together the Eucharistic life and the spirituality of reconciliation, so that, life becomes a spirituality of a reconciled humanity.

Reconciliation involves a way of life (spirituality) and a mission. To implement the spirituality of reconciliation, justice and peace, the Church needs witnesses deeply rooted in Christ, nourished by his word and sacraments. Thus, they may strive towards holiness, in virtue of an ongoing conversion and an intense prayer life, and a giving themselves to the work of reconciliation, justice and peace in the world, even to the point of martyrdom, after the example of Christ. Through their courage in the truth, their self-denial and their joy, they bear witness in a way of life which is in keeping with their faith.\textsuperscript{161}

The mission must foster a sort of liturgical formation which will bridge the dichotomy between Eucharistic liturgy and the liturgy of life (what we do each day of the week). If reconciliation becomes a way of life it then presupposes a continuous striving again and again to that end when the Lord will establish a definitive reconciliation in his kingdom in which we are already sharing though not completely.

\textbf{10.0 CONCLUSION}

\textsuperscript{159} Synod for Africa, Penultimate Act, \textit{The Final Propositions}, \texttt{www.chiesa.espressonline.it}, 26\textsuperscript{th} October, 2009, Rome, Proposition 8
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, Proposition 8
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., Proposition, 9
Since reconciliation is an eschatological reality, we finally propose that the Church through the sacraments (that which makes present here and now what is celebrated) and word (the good news that God is reconciling all things to himself in Christ) should show human beings of the world their identity which exists in the life of the Triune God. Sacraments of communion and healing should have a special importance, although not at the detriment of others, because our world is in great need of communion and healing because of the wounds of division, sin and pride. Therefore, the sacraments of reconciliation, Eucharist, anointing of the sick and baptism should be given a proper place in the daily life of every Christian.

Finally, the paradigm of 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. Therefore, reconciliation through justice and peace is the real mission of the African Church at this time when the whole continent is bleeding and mourning for the loved ones lost.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hunsinger George, *Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008),


SECAM, *Christ Our Peace: Church as Family of God, Place and Sacrament of Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Peace in Africa*, The 12th Plenary Assembly, held in Rome from 30th Sept- 9th Oct, 2000


Harrison Nonna Verna, *Zizioulas on Communion and Otherness*, in St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 42, No. 3-4, 1998


Porter Thomas, *The Last Supper: Naming the Conflict and Giving Bread and Wine*, in Conflict and Communion: Reconciliation and Restorative Justice at Christ’s Table, (Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 2006)