BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

How Can Churches Fight against Discrimination, Exclusion and Violence?

Contributions of Young People from Africa, Asia and Europe

Edited by Jochen Motte, Andar Parlindungan and Sabine Hübner

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in three Continents

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"BEING SALT OF THE EARTH" – ACTING TOGETHER RESISTING VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM TOWARDS PEACE, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Under this theme, the General Assembly of the United Evangelical Mission takes place in Germany in 2022. UEM member churches and institutions in Africa, Asia and Germany have experienced various pressing forms of discrimination, violence and extremism in recent years, which pose a common challenge to mission in UEM at the local, regional and global levels.

In light of the UEM Assembly 2022 and the biblical theme "Being Salt of the Earth", the UEM invited young people from the UEM constituency to contribute essays to the study day on the theme at the Assembly and to reflect on the current challenges for churches to respond to discrimination, violence and extremism and to build inclusive communities.

The rich fruits of this essay competition are presented in this publication. The authors have reflected on various thematic issues that they believe should be addressed through mission work of the churches.

The following areas of concern may be mentioned: religious discrimination, plurality, diversity and inclusiveness; discrimination and violence against indigenous people; reconciliation, poverty, mission response to people addicted to drugs, ecological violence, marginalization of people affected by natural disasters, sexual violence, violation of children rights, racism, single parents, gender justice, violence in the context of war and violent conflicts.

An international team of three jurors, Professor Dr. Claudia Jahnel, Professor Dr. Dennis Solon and Dr. Jean Mutombo evaluated all articles on request of the UEM and proposed three articles resp. their authors to be awarded and invited to the General Assembly of UEM to present their essays, – Ms. Norita Sembiring, Mr. Georges Nkuwa Milosi and Ms. Katarina Lange.

We congratulate the winners and we express our deep thanks to all who participated in the essay competition. We also would like to express our sincere thanks to the team of jurors who spent significant time to read all contributions and to jointly propose the winners of the award.

Especial thanks go to John McLaughlin for proofreading the articles.

We hope that the essays together with the recommendations will be received as meaningful impulses for the mission work of the UEM and its members. Based on the common commitment of the UEM members from 1996 to strive together for justice, peace and the integrity of creation these voices from young people may give direction and empower UEM and its members to resist all forces of division, discrimination and violence in this world torn apart by building inclusive communities.

Jochen Motte, Andar Parlindungan, Sabine Hübner

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES – CHURCHES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, EXCLUSION AND VIOLENCE

Introduction by the Jurors

Inclusive is the opposite of exclusive, violent, oppressive and unjust. Inclusive communities are open-minded, not gated. They overcome barriers between religions, trespass the boundaries of traditions and put the margins into the centre of awareness and advocacy.

The articles, we as jurors received, breathe this Spirit of reformation and transformation. Many authors do not hide their self-critical perspectives on their respective churches or on the community of churches while identifying church practices that contribute to exclusion or oppression rather than to inclusion, justice and reconciliation. They call on the churches to speak truth to the powers instead of keeping silent.

The challenges that the articles name and discuss are crucial on the regional level. But they almost always affect the world community and, for sure, concern the community of churches.

Two topics run strikingly as a common thread through many articles. The first is the challenge of violence, which appears in many shades and dynamics: as violence against children and women but also against nature. Also, drug abuse and poverty are forms of violence. Last, but not least, the imprint of colonial epistemological violence is still evident today: in the various forms of racism or in the marginalisation of local knowledge systems.

The second salient topic is the challenge of diversity in multireligious and multi-faith situations. In particular, authors with an Asian background are confronted with interreligious conflicts and the demand for peace, reconciliation and hospitality.

We assessed the articles in accordance with the criteria specified in the call for contributions: the relevance of the challenge stated, the quality of the analysis and the resources used, the theological reflection, argument and originality, as well as the recommendations to the Church and, especially, to the UEM. Some reports are based on the authors' own experience but lack deeper analysis and theological reflection. These, and the messages they convey, are nevertheless

important. Some articles offer an inspiring practice of re-reading certain Bible-passages in relation to the context of the challenges at hand.

The articles stimulate new and innovative theological reflections. We hope that as much as they inspired our discussion as jurors, they will also stimulate theological discussion and ethical reflections within the UEM member churches.

First Prize

How can the communion of churches better serve the survivors of natural disasters? The paper, *Church mission in response to the multifaceted vulnerability and resilience demonstrated by survivors of the Mount Sinabung volcanic eruption in Karoland*, invites us to reflect on this urgent missional question. The author looks into the various forms of suffering, which the Sinabung eruption survivors have had to go through, having experienced the rage of nature, which, for centuries, has been a source of life for their forebears. They are struggling to find a home in their relocation sites, uprooted from the soil of their ancestors, having to live each day in subsistence.

Furthermore, the growing culture of capitalism in the area is something the survivors also have to grapple with. As a result, the relocation sites in Siosar have become a setting for, and manifestation of, inequality, discrimination and exclusion. Thus, the author – and rightly so – calls on all within the UEM communion of churches to a responsive ministry for, and with, the survivors of natural disasters to: 1) recognise and map "the vulnerabilities of the survivors"; 2) "identify the sources of strength" or avenues for their empowerment; 3) assess and "evaluate the church's [relevant] ministry thus far"; and 4) systematise and articulate Christian values "that are most appropriate to the needs of the survivors".

The paper also raises the challenge of exploring and collecting local wisdom as valuable cultural resources toward community resilience. Perceiving a missional opportunity of the Church, even in times of natural disaster, the author is convinced that "no one will be excluded," as long the church people "go deeper to find God's grace and share the good news with all creation."

Second Prize

The article, *'Witch children' in Kinshasa and the silence of my Church* tackles an important, but all too often invisible and even "invisibilised" challenge. Starting in the context of Kinshasa in the DRC, the author analyses the practice of branding children as witches. As a result of this stigmatisation, these children

are subjected to inhumane abuse, abandoned by their families, neglected and physically and mentally abused. The analysis reveals the multiple dynamics that contribute to these practices. In addition to a demonising theology and the ambiguous role of new revivalist and Pentecostal churches, the author highlights poverty and the cultural belief in witchcraft as factors that eminently contribute to the disastrous practice that hits the most vulnerable group in society: the children. Neither the regional churches nor the community of churches worldwide has, up to now, paid sufficient attention to this catastrophe, which affects the lives of thousands of children – not only in Kinshasa, but also in Nigeria, Ghana and many other countries as well as the African diaspora. On the basis of the God-given dignity of human beings and of the Biblical witness demonstrating the preference for children, the author calls for concrete measures: "I believe that the suffering of children is something that is close to God's beating heart and makes him grieve deeply".

The jurors assessed this article as outstanding, because it brings to the attention of the UEM a pressing challenge, which, for too long, has been ignored and calls for social and spiritual transformation.

Third Prize

The Christian message for single parents – challenges for mission and diakonia is the title of the article. The author of the essay starts from her personal experience as a single mother of three children. A situation that exposes her to the challenges of isolation, exclusion, discrimination, social and economic insecurity, inability to serve due to lack of time and dependence on state assistance. She also notes that she is not alone in her situation. In Germany, where she lives, as well as in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world, millions of men and women are isolated and deprived of the attention of others. This social phenomenon, which also affects church members, seems to receive less consideration within the Church. The author proposes a theological, pastoral and diaconal response.

Starting with the observation that the Bible is silent on the issue of single parents or single mothers, the author evokes the resumption of the Deuteronomic code of the protection of defenceless widows and their survival. Three women from the Bible are presented as theological paradigms: Hagar (Gen 16:6–13), the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8–16) and Tabitha (Acts 9:36–43). On the basis of these, theological impulses and images of God are derived. In the case of Hagar, God sees her and her child in distress and helps them. For the widow of Zarephath with her child in a situation of life-threatening shortage, God pro-

vides for her existential needs. And finally, for Tabitha, God is the giver of life and the one who is in solidarity with her. From these images of God, an image of the Church emerges that sees people in distress, including single women, and is in solidarity with them and includes them in its activities.

From these examples, the author recommends the integration and inclusion of single parents in the mission and life of the Church, while the Church develops an appropriate diakonia and spirituality. She recommends the use of digitalisation as a resource to address isolation through preaching, prayer, worship and diaconal services. In this way, lonely people can discover that they have a place both in the Church and in society and that their abilities are considered in the appointment of giving and receiving. Considered in their ecumenical dimensions, these aspects could be exploited by the UEM in its vision of being an inclusive community for an inclusive society without discrimination.

Claudia Jahnel, Jean-Gottfried Mutombo, Dennis Solon

CHURCH MISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE MULTIFACETED VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Demonstrated by Survivors of the Mount Sinabung Volcanic Eruption in Karo Land

Norita Novalina Sembiring

(First Prize)

Abstract

The Church as a community of believers is never separated from its social life. The Church does not exist in a vacuum, but in a public space filled with various struggles. A struggle that requires a response is survivors' struggle following a natural disaster. They go on with their lives, having to cope with difficult struggles. The Church needs to develop an appropriate ministry, empathise with those affected and actualise its mission amid all the different vulnerabilities in the aftermath of natural disasters. The repeated eruptions of the Mount Sinabung volcano in Karo Land in North Sumatra, Indonesia – now in their eleventh year (2010–2021) – have challenged the Church to establish the mission of the Kingdom of God for the world. The survivors' struggle in the Siosar region relocation area obliges the Church to present justice and acceptance as a counter-measure to discrimination and exclusion.
Keywords: Mount Sinabung natural disaster, exclusion, vulnerability, resilience, Church mission.

1. Disaster: A reality of life

Disasters are events that occur every so often in human life. They cause various forms of suffering, both personal and communal, physical and psychological. Boris N. Porfiriev defines a disaster as,

> a state/condition destabilizing the social system that manifests itself in a malfunctioning or disruption of connections and communications between

> its elements or social units (communities, social groups, and individuals); partial or total destruction/demolition; physical and psychological overloads suffered by some of these elements; thus, making itnecessary to take extraordinary or emergency counter-measures to re-establish stability.[1]

Destabilisation in various spheres of life as a result of disasters necessitates a comprehensiveresponse, since the impact of a disaster is never a solitary one. The trauma experienced oftenlasts for a very long time. Timothy M. Maher Jr and Seth D. Baum, in 'Adaptation to And Recovery from Global Catastrophe' (2013), emphasised the importance of post-disaster adaptation and recovery efforts:

> Global catastrophes, such as nuclear war, pandemics and ecological collapse threaten the sustainability of human civilization. To date, most work on global catastrophes has focused on preventing the catastrophes, neglecting what happens to any catastrophe survivors ... how the adaptation/recovery could proceed and makes connections to severallines of research. Research on resilience theory is considered in detail and used to develop a new method for analyzing the environmental and social stressors that global catastrophe survivors would face ... A key point is that survivors may exist in small, isolated communities disconnected from global trade and, thus, must be able to survive and rebuild on their own. Understanding the conditions facing isolated survivors can help promote successful adaptation and recovery.[2]

Like Maher and Baum, this paper is a theological contribution in response to the vulnerabilityand resilience of post-disaster survivors. I limit the definition of disaster here to a natural process, such as a volcanic eruption, and not as a result of destructive human actions. This research departs from my concern vis-a-vis the struggle of the Karo people, who, as survivors of the Mount Sinabung eruption, now live in the Siosar relocation area. I am limiting this research to three villages in the red zone closest to Mount Sinabung: Bekerah, Simacem, and Sukameriah, which are now in ruins and no longer recognisable, with all access roads cut off. I also chose these villages because their residents were the first to move to the relocation area in Siosar prepared by the government. The story of life in these new surroundings encompasses the entire range of feelings associated with exclusion, for example, alienation, abandonment and injustice. The Church needs to respond to an ecclesialfellowship that supports one another in the Body of Christ.

1 E. L. Quarantelli, What Is a Disaster?, London and New York: Routledge 1998, p. 61–62.
2 Timothy Maher / Seth Baum, Adaptation to and Recovery from Global Catastrophe, in: Sustainability 5, No. 4 (March 2013), p. 1461.

2. Eruption and relocation: Living in the aftermath of the disaster

From generation to generation, the people of Tanah Karo (tanah = land) have appreciated thefact that Mount Sinabung and Mount Sibayak (the two most enormous mountains in Karo Land) provide many benefits in their lives, especially in socio-economical terms. The volcanic material that has decayed as a product of the eruption of these two mountains hundreds of years ago contains nutrients that are good for the soil. This good soil fertility has led Karo Land to be known as *Taneh Karo Simalem (cool and pleasing)*. These conditions also motivate most citizens to earn a living in the agricultural sector.[3] The comfort, welfare, and survival of its citizens are a consequence of the gift of soil and mountain fertility.

After four hundred years, Mount Sinabung erupted again in late August 2010. This sudden eruption caused panic and fear among residents. Based on the results of the scientific monitoring of the Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation, the activity level (or volcanic status) of Mount Sinabung was relatively high, which meant that those living on the slopes of Mount Sinabung had to be evacuated immediately.[4] After three years of reduced activity, it erupted again in 2013 and continues to do so up to the present day.

The eruptions brought about many changes. The change was dramatic for those living in Bekerah, Simacem, and Sukameriah. On February 2, 2014, the government declared that the residents of the three villages had to be relocated. The villages were in the red zone, aboutthree kilometers from the top of Mount Sinabung. The Minister of Environment and Forestry issued a production forest release permit for a relocation area of 447.86 hectares for agriculture, plantations, and housing and 11.02 hectares for road access.[5] At the end of 2015, and beginning of 2016, after several preparatory stages, residents of the villages settled in Siosar, about 19 kilometers from Kabanjahe, the capital of Karo Regency. Relocation means moving one's home or workplace (factory, offices, etc.) to a new location.[6] Relocating from the old village to the new was the most realistic option during the fluctuating situation around Mount Sinabung, especially considering the original villages had been destroyed. This paper focuses on the life stories of the survivors living in their new homes.

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3 Sahat Siburian / Deonel Sinaga, Kabar Dari Tanah Karo Simalem: Kiprah GBKP Melayani Korban Bencana Letusan Gunung Sinabung, Kabanjahe 2016, p. 9–10.

4 Ibid., p. 15.

5 Ibid., p. 131–132.

6 Kathryn Kavanagh / Michael Ashby (eds.), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Walton Street: Oxford University Press, n.d., p. 988.

Refugees, victims, and survivors are three words commonly used to refer to people affected by natural disasters. A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave his or her country, home,etc., for political or religious reasons or because of war.[7] A victim is a person, animal or thing that is injured, killed or destroyed as a result of crime, bad luck or accident.[8] A survivor is a person who has survived.[9] In this paper, I choose to use survivor as my working definition, since it has a more substantial, more active and enduring meaning than the other two words. Survivor is the most relevant word according to the proposed theoretical framework that I am using and the recommendations given in this paper.

The eruption and relocation created several crises. I noted it as follows:

Firstly, there is the crisis of relationality with nature and one's place of residence. Leaving the village (*kuta*) is synonymous with relinquishing one's ancestral lands. For the people of Karo, *kuta* is a legacy from their ancestors, who lived here from generation to generation. Each *kuta* is a territorial unit, the hometown of a particular clan. Each village usually has its clan (*sukut*) or *merga simanteki kuta* (the clan of the village's founders).This means that relocation may diminish the history of the village and the struggles of its ancestors, since the relocation is no longer at the initiative of the ancestors, but in response to an unexpected situation, namely a natural disaster. Exclusion like this is a hard struggle. The house, as a residence, is now different from the house in the previous village. The people now live in houses of the same shape, size and colour. The houses provided by the government arethe work of the Indonesian National Army, which means that the paintwork and roofs of all the houses are green. Each family is given a house about 36 square meters in size, on a plot ofland measuring around 200 square meters. If someone wants to add to the house, it is adjustedaccording to the financial capacity of each family, given that the survivors' economic situation is not yet stable.

The second crisis is socio-economic, since the quality of agricultural land provided is less fertile than the land they had before. The new land was formerly covered with pine trees. Of course, this has had an impact on the community's economy. The costs involved in managingless fertile land were much higher than in their old villages. The land area given by the government to the head of each family is the same, namely half a hectare. The ownership rights to agricultural land awarded by the government give land-use rights. It takes about three to four years for the soil to normalise. The wind factor also affects plants' growth.

7 Ibid., p. 981.
8 Ibid., p. 1326.
9 Ibid., p. 1204.

Strong winds can damage crops, sometimes leading to failed harvests. Being a survivor in a new area is like being a stranger in a foreign land, experiencing discrimination and exclusion.

The third crisis has arisen due to the global capitalist movement beginning to infiltrate the area around Siosar, with displays of a luxurious, sophisticated lifestyle, which is in stark contrast to the life of the Siosar people. This movement of global capitalism is like a massivepower entering Siosar. In the new year 2021, locations for tourists in Siosar, especially thoseprivately managed on a homestay basis with European nuances, have successfully attracted public attention in North Sumatra. This tourist attraction is located approximately 100 metersbefore the gate to the Siosar area. This homestay facility, with relatively expensive overnight costs, is crowded with visitors from outside Karo Land every weekend. This juxtaposition of two social classes (rich and poor) presents contrasting social realities.

The three developments outlined above illustrate the multifaceted vulnerability of the survivors. The crisis of relationality concerning nature and one's place of residence, the socio-economic crisis, and the emergence of a new culture of capitalism clearly encapsulate the discrimination and exclusion involved in relocation. Against this background, how are the survivors expected to survive? Do they accept all of this as fate or even regard it as a rebuke from God? Would local wisdom be able to provide the answer? In what ways does the Churchsupport survivors? What kind of ecclesial fellowship needs to be built among the survivors to reinterpret their struggles and vulnerability in the embrace of the Triune God?

3. Theoretical analysis and theological reflection: How to be resilient

The discourse on vulnerability in theology swings between two fundamental ideas: on the one hand, vulnerability is understood as the unfortunate reality facing human beings, drawing them close to the possibility of being hurt; on the other hand, vulnerability is understood as the essential human condition.[10] This paper intends to show how the Church feels compassion for survivors in an unfortunate situation and how the survivors could embrace their vulnerabilities. In one of his articles, Nico Koopman, 'Vulnerable Church in a Vulnerable World? Towards an Ecclesiology of Vulnerability' (2008) emphasised that, 'To

10 Joas Adiprasetya, Gereja Pascapandemi Merengkuh Kerapuhan, Jakarta: STFT Jakarta & BPK Gunung Mulia 2021, p. 14–15.

be a church in a vulnerable world is to be a vulnerable church.'[11] He also asserted that,

> To be royal servants entail that churches proclaim the message of hope and victory in Jesus Christ. This hope is witnessed to in the resilience of people in so-called hopeless situations. It is witnessed to in the strength of people to persevere against all odds. This hope in action is a crucial dimension of the royal task of the vulnerable Church. It clearly demonstrates that the vulnerability of the Church, humans and the triune God is not a surrender to the threatening powers of the world, but a victory in the midst of seeming defeats, light amidst darkness and joy in themidst of sorrow. The royal Church awaits the dawning of the day when the reality of victory in Christ will be fully realised.[12]

This opinion clearly shows the importance of the Church proclaiming hope, so that survivorscan survive and continue to struggle even during the most challenging situations.

Karo's ancestors often advised, 'If you are sad, do not be too sad; if you cry, do not cry too much.' This local wisdom teaches a fact of life that there are times when sadness andtears come into our lives. We do not need to cover it up, but we must control it. That is what is contained in the message: do not overdo it. We recognise sadness and crying as our body's response to hurt and suffering. We need to embrace the body's response while maintaining stability. The stabilisation that is maintained through the message of Karo's ancestors can be enriched with the message of the Gospel. The Triune God will embrace ourpain and vulnerability through Christ. Christ is with us. This is where the Gospel message illuminates culture.

Heike Springhart, in her article, 'Vulnerable Creation: Vulnerable Human Life between Riskand Tragedy', emphasised that,

> We have to consider the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross, the point of God's humanity in Jesus Christ is the vulnerable situation of radical vulnerability on the Cross, and the risk of incarnation that God takes in Jesus Christ. Vulnerability is a risk: it is human endangerment and susceptibility to harm with regard to body and souland within social systemic contexts. At the same time, vulnerability is a resource: it is

11 Nico Koopman, Vulnerable Church in a Vulnerable World? Towards an Ecclesiology of Vulnerability, in: Journal of Reformed Theology 2, no. 3 (2008), p. 241, https://brill.com/view/journals/jrt/2/3/article-p240_4.xml.
[accessed April 14, 2021].
12 Ibid., p. 253.

> the precondition and the expression of trust, mutual respect, and responsibility, and a salutary limitation on the illusion of the feasibility of a successful and perfect life. Vulnerability characterizes human life between risk and tragedy and keeps it open to transformation.[13]

Vulnerability cannot be seen only as a tragedy but as a momentum of transformation that creates more resilient resources, in which virtues are born, by promoting mutual trust, mutualrespect and responsibility. This benevolence and endurance has its basis in the incarnation ofChrist and culminates in the event of the Cross. Through his incarnation, Christ embraces vulnerable humanity into Himself, and the event of the Cross becomes Christ's event that enables us to become resilient and keep going.

By acknowledging the vulnerability and suffering experienced as a consequence of the eruption of Mount Sinabung, survivors are invited to reflect again on Christ's work for the world. This is where the Church needs to continuously assist the survivors as part of its mission. Christ continues to work with the survivors throughout their relocation, because thislife is like a pilgrimage, and we are journeying with Christ.

Multifaceted vulnerability in response to relocation need not be covered up, because, as humans, we are vulnerable creatures. Sturla J. Stålsett insists, 'Human vulnerability is a valueto be promoted and protected, not to be removed.'[14] He strictly emphasised that,

> "First and foremost, humans are mortals. Human life is perishable – 'from dust to dust.' Perishability is inscribed in alllife processes. We begin dying the very minute we are born. Any process of growth is simultaneously a process of corrosion and destruction. Secondly, being human is being-in-relation to other humans, to nature, to self and to God**.** Thirdly, and thus moving explicitly to theological anthropology: according to Judeo-Christian faith, the human being is created in the 'likeness and image of God.'" (Gen 1:26–28)[15]

In our life journey, we need to realise that disaster and the pain it causes is part of the life process. This awareness reminds us that we live with brothers and sis-

13 Heike Springhart, Vulnerable Creation: Vulnerable Human Life between Risk and Tragedy, in: Dialog 56, no. 4 (December 2017), p. 388–389, http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/dial.12358 [Accessed April 27, 2021].

14 Sturla J. Stålsett, Towards a Political Theology of Vulnerability Anthropological and Theological Propositions, in: Political Theology 16, no. 5 (September 2015), p. 471, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1179/1462317X14Z.000000000115 [accessed April 14, 2021].

15 Ibid., p. 468.

ters in and alongside other creations; mountains and volcanoes occur as natural processes; sometimes, they erupt. Thus, the exclusion experienced, when they do, is not really exclusion. Perhaps we are invitedfor inclusion along with all of God's creation; if we look at disasters cosmocentrically, are they not all necessary (volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis) as part of the universe's continuous movement and processes? So that, God is not punishing us but inviting us to walk together in a *universe dance procession*? My thought of the *universe dance procession* comes from the idea of the perichoresis of the Holy Trinity.[16] One of the arguments underlined, "it is not clear how could any circling or going around explain the mystery of unity in the Holy Trinity, unless it had been really thought that the Holy Three Persons are doing the circle dance." It is this kind of divine dance that we perform together with the universe's continuous movement and processes. With such a mind-set, the survivors are able to embrace their vulnerabilities and have the resilience to continue life by pursuing Christianvirtues.

The essential thing in embracing vulnerability and compassion with those who are morevulnerable is our faithfulness.

> "Faithfulness to God implies that we recognize our vulnerable essence as Church – a vulnerability that is based in the vulnerability of the God whom we worship, and in the vulnerability of the people that he has created. Faithfulness implies that we give priority to the most vulnerable ones. It also means that we fulfill our calling in all walks of life in the mode of vulnerability. Exactly where we embark on the journey of vulnerability, which is the only faithful journeyfor the Church, the journey of dependence upon God – of living only from the actions and promises of God – we may in surprising ways experience the victory of the resurrected Lord who is also the vulnerable crucified Lord."[17]

The mission of the Church today must take account of all the vulnerabilities that occur, whilefinding sources of encouragement for a spirituality of resilience.

4. Recommendations

For my Church, the Batak Karo Protestant Church (GBKP), this research is a contribution to the provision of continuous guidance and assistance to the survivors of the Sinabung eruption.I offer the model of the Church as a pilgriming

16 See Slobodan Stamatović, The Meaning of Perichoresis, in: Open Theology 2, no. 1 (January 9, 2016), p. 306–307, https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/opth-2016-0026/html [Accessed July 13, 2022].

17 Koopman, Vulnerable Church, p. 254.

community that embraces its vulnerability in the love of Christ and becomes a family that supports one another to be resilient and survive. Indeed, the 2014 GBKP Pastors Conference formulated it as follows,

> "GBKP is responsible for providing education and guidance to refugees to remain productive, in addition to providingmaterial support. Besides that, the books for church community development take on themes that raise awareness in GBKP residents about caring and responsibility for others. The Sinabung eruption event is considered a learning process to demonstrate the quality of human resources."[18]

However, in my opinion, this is not enough. The mission of the ecclesial community is not only to be charitable but to be transformative. Living in the aftermath of disaster must be interpreted as an opportunity given by God to pilgrimage within and with the universe in the embrace of the Triune God. We do not just want to go back to the past (to the excellent placein Bekerah, Simacem, and Sukameriah village). Here, in the reality of relocation, survivors live with new challenges and new values.

I offer *a sitting position* with stakeholders as a pedagogical effort for church members to produce a resilient community. I remember the importance of such a sitting position in Karoculture, especially when attending *kerja-kerja*, which refers to traditional events in Karo.

Sitting cross-legged on a plastic or pandan-based mat is a recognizable posture in the localKaro context. Sitting together is usually filled with waiting activities (deliberations) or a sign of presence that empathizes with the inviting family. These two aspects, deliberation and empathy, are essential in the social system of the Karo people. Karo kinship system binds every family to contribute to the deliberation on various occasions, whether happy or sad. This sitting posture in the spirit of deliberation and empathy can be used to unravel the struggle for the salvation of all creation in the context of the post-eruption. We need to sit down together to ensure that post-eruption life is not easy, but we can overcome the vulnerability. These Christian virtues help us (the survivors and other parties) to keep going.

Therefore, I promote several concrete recommendations to the churches:

– Realizing and mapping the vulnerabilities of the survivor. This grouping of vulnerabilities will make the Church respond appropriately to the most ur-

18 Moderamen GBKP, Keputusan-Keputusan KONPEN GBKP: Sejak Tahun 1968–2014 (Kabanjahe, 2015), p. 324–325.

gent needs ofthe common issues (for example: exclusion and economic system). Here, the attitude of openness is necessary.

- The Church creates action plans based on the scale of needs from the grouping that hasbeen created in stage one (for example, agriculture support, trauma healing, scholarshipeducation, etc.). After that, the Church must derive clear goals from the action plans.
- Identify the resources of strength. In this case, GBKP needs to share resources by involving GBKP congregation members who can participate as needed in the second stage (experts in agriculture, counselors, pastor, and foster parents). These shared resources can strengthen our fellowship in the midst of the existing diversity. It signifies we are the body of Christ. Even though these resources do not only come from parties outside the survivors, the survivors themselves can become resources by using the pilgrimage experience during the pre-eruption, eruption, and post-eruption asa reflection of an affirming faith. The community may develop eco-spiritual tourism-based community experiences in this new place and new life. This experience is also a source of resilience for congregation members who may experience suffering from different aspects. Thus, the role of the Subject-Subject will be increasingly felt in the fellowship.
- The collaboration of the Church, government, and volcanologists to warn the peopleliving around Mount Sinabung about the mountain's natural conditions is very important because the volcano will occasionally erupt and disrupt the people's agriculture. The early warning educates the public that agriculture under Mount Sinabung has two aspects: soil fertility and natural risks.
- Collaboration of the Karo District Education Office, teaching staff, churches, and other religious institutions to design a curriculum on disaster mitigation in education from kindergarten to university. Disaster mitigation needs to be discussed early on sothat the perspective of disaster is understood more wisely. In this stage, inclusion as the principle is very prominent. This topic is necessary considering that disasters are often present in human life. In the curriculum, the disasters described can be expanded, including natural disasters as processes and characteristics of nature and moral disasters due to human exploitative actions.
- In line with that, the guidebooks for building the faith of GBKP church members also need to consider disaster theology and eco-theology *curriculum.* Pastors, elders,and deacons need to sit together to formulate a more welcoming and friendly face of GBKP's theology (*theology in loco*) where the resilience enables us to "jump higher" amid the multifaceted vulnerabilities. Through these developments, GBKP implements its vision of "To be God's

fellow workers to manifest God's mercy to the world" (1 Corinthians 3:9; 1 Peter 2:9–10).

- Consequently, my recommendations to the UEM communion are that an in-depth theological study of post-disaster ministry is needed, which is not only anthropocentric but takes a more cosmocentric approach. A profound approach considers the work of the Triune God, who embraces the universe; Christ also gives salvation in natural disasters because God's love pervades all creation. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote in Epistle 101, 'The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved.'[19] This means that nothing is separate from Christ, including Mount Sinabung and its eruptions. No one will be excluded if we go deeper to find God's grace and share the good news with all creation. Thus, we have a disaster quotient (DQ) as well as an intelligence quotient (IQ), social quotient (SQ), emotional quotient (EQ) and spiritual quotient (SQ). The most important thing that we must have nowadays is this disaster quotient (DQ). Based on the Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective (GLEP) in UEM as the foundation and "umbrella" in our fellowship, the motto of the inclusion movement: "Nothing about us without us," also applies to the integrity of creation.
- Finally, to the UEM members, I recommend that they explore and tap into their local wisdom, which has values of resilience and struggle. Please make efforts to find it in Indonesia (Batak, Java, Kalimantan, Papua), Sri Lanka, Hongkong, Philipines, Africa and Germany. The mission of the Church is to illuminate the legacy through the light of the Gospel; as Jesus said in Matthew 5:13–14, 'You are the salt of the earth … you are the light of the world.' Lastly, keep moving and living because we are not alone! We are together in the UEM Communion!

These are several recommendations I give so that it becomes our concern and movement together as a fellowship of UEM member churches that responds to the multifaceted vulnerabilities and lives the spirituality of resilience.

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'WITCH CHILDREN' IN KINSHASA AND THE SILENCE OF MY CHURCH

Georges Nkuwa Milosi

(Second Prize)

1. Introduction

The dream of most married couples is to have children, but sometimes they come and at other times they do not. When they do come, children are considered a blessing from God. Unfortunately, some children are considered a curse. One example of this concerns the phenomenon of 'witch children'. This is more commonplace in third-world countries, where children are accused of being witches. They are sent for deliverance to the Church, which, unfortunately, often ends up abusing them. This paper will look closely at how the Church in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) handles these cases. The focus will be on how Protestant Churches fail to take action against 'child witch' accusations, or challenge other religious communities involved in these practices to stop. The Protestant Church does nothing to save children accused of being witches. As a result, the number of street children continues to grow.

2. Description of the challenge

Africa is a continent, in which large numbers of people are 'believers'. Some believe in religious figures or deities; others believe in spirits. People are very much aware of the spiritual realm, including witchcraft. It is common for people to use the power of witchcraft for a variety of reasons, most of which, however, are harmful. Children have been victims of witchcraft accusations. It has become increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that such allegations against children are common in DRC, especially in the capital city, Kinshasa. The proliferation of new branches (or denominations) of churches identified as 'revivalist', 'Pentecostal', or 'revelation' churches is one of the developments that has fuelled accusations against children being witches. The ambiguous role of new revivalist and Pentecostal churches with respect to the 'witch children' phenomenon in the DRC is

alarming. It is not even clear if it is a ministry or business. Child witchcraft accusations constitute a social phenomenon that has plagued Kinshasa and other major African cities since the mid-1990s.[1] The so-called pastors and self-proclaimed prophets of these churches have capitalised on such teachings to make profits.

'Witch child' is a term used to refer to a child accused of using witchcraft. Such an accusation is not a recent phenomenon in the DRC. In Kinshasa, according to Hanson & Ruggiero (2013), these accusations represent an emerging epidemic that appears to have little to do with the tradition or practices of witchcraft.

Poverty and other economic factors (such as unemployment) play a significant role in witchcraft accusations against children. Given the reality of the poor state of the economy, most families look for someone to blame and, in some cases, children fall victim of this. Aleksandra Cimpric noted that the process of accusing children generally begins when a key family member (father or mother) dies or becomes unemployed or sick or when the family is poor.[2] However, they are not the only explanatory factors especially considering that treatment for witchcraft is expensive. In most cases, the family will hire a pastor or evangelist from a revivalist church or a traditional healer to exorcise the whole family of the child suspected of witchcraft.

Children accused of witchcraft are kept prisoner in religious buildings, where they are exposed to torture (e.g. beating), other treatment (e.g. forcing them to vomit) and abuse under the pretext of exorcism or in the name of religion. After the exorcism, the child is sent out of the church. The churches have no follow-up plans for these children, who, once outside, often have no choice but to live on the street and engage in criminal activities to survive. At this point, since the children are not wanted by their family and the Church does not want to keep them, they end up on the street.

3. Theoretical analysis

The DRC is a country with a high proportion of its population living below the poverty level. Kinshasa is the most populated city in the country. According to Cardogan-Poole, evidence shows that between 50,000 and 250,000 children lived on the streets of the major cities across the DRC after being accused of witchcraft.[3] Family members often try to find someone to blame for their misery.

1 Edmond Kesseh, Child Witchcraft Accusations in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Doctoral dissertation, Walden University 2020.

2 Aleksandra Cimpric, Children accused of witchcraft. An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa Dakar, UNICEF 2010.

3 Cited by Kesseh, Child Witchcraft Accusations, p. 55.

Unfortunately, children are often victims of this and, as a result, many of them are forced to live on the streets.

These children have to endure a great deal of abuse before they 'choose' to live on the street. After being accused by their family, they are brought to a pastor for deliverance. These sessions of deliverance often involve cruel practices. Erwin Van Der Meer wrote that accused children are frequently subjected to 'exorcisms'[4] that take place in the church building. In other words, the revivalist church buildings are places of worship on Sunday, and incarceration facilities for exorcisms during the week. The conditions, in which these children are kept, are inhumane. They are often tortured, deprived of food and water, and beaten. Some children choose to confess that they are witches, even if they are not, simply to get away from the torture they have had to endure.

The increase in the number of revivalist churches has contributed to the increase in the number of street children. Leethen Bartholomew estimates that there around 3,000 revivalist churches in Kinshasa alone[5], and the country, as a whole, has seen a significant increase in the number of these churches. The challenge they pose is that they are based on the personal mystical experience of the pastor.[6] Compared to other church denominations (e.g. Protestant), they cannot be monitored, since they have no hierarchy or identifiable structure to which they are accountable.

The different forms of belief in witchcraft are not necessarily a problem in themselves, since Africa is a spiritual continent. However, they do become problematic when they start to lead to the persecution of these children. Some of them are burned alive. It is hardly surprising, when, in the face of this, some of them choose to run away. According to Kesseh, thousands of children between the ages of five and ten had been thrown out of family homes onto the streets.[7] Most of the time, revivalist pastors will not deliver these children because they were not witches in the first place. Thus, what happens is that the church in question refuses to keep them, and the families refuse to take them back in. Because they have nowhere else to go, they end up on the streets.

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4 Erwin Van Der Meer, Child witchcraft accusations in Southern Malawi, in: Australasian Review of African Studies 34/1 (2013), p. 129–144.

5 Leethen Bartholomew, Child abuse linked to beliefs in witchcraft, in: Transnational Social Review, 5/2 (2015), p. 193–198.

6 Naomi R. Cahn, Poor Children: Child Witches and Child Soldiers in Sub-Saharan Africa, 3 Ohio St. J. Crim. L. 413 (2006).

7 Janneke Verhaegh / Iris Soute / Angelique Kessels / Panos Markopoulos (eds.), On the design of Camelot: An outdoor game for children, in: Proceedings of the 2006 conference on Interaction design and children, Tampere 2006, p. 9–16.

One other unfortunate aspect of this phenomenon is that revivalist pastors are not necessarily the source of the allegations, although they do play a key role in confirming them. In other words, children are accused by family members and condemned by the pastor. If this situation is not addressed, the number of street children will continue to rise. Research has shown that witchcraft accusations are the number one cause behind the phenomenon of street children and child homelessness in Kinshasa[8] This should make our church leaders wake up, since the politicians do nothing to help.

4. Theological reflection

Human civilisation seems to have an innate tendency to prey on weakness. In human history, children have been victim of such predatory tendencies, because they are weak and, in most cases, are unable to defend themselves. There are many accounts of violence against children throughout the Bible. For example, Jesus survived the threat of violence when he was an infant, forced to become a refugee in Egypt together with his mother Mary and father Joseph. Children have always been regarded as prospective prey by strong people. This might be the reason why God chooses to defend them.

The concern of the Church for human rights, in general, and the rights of children, in particular, is rooted in its social teaching principles. For the Church, the dignity of each human being is at the heart of human rights. When we talk about human rights and dignity, this should not be understood as applying only to adults. Children are also human beings. They also deserve to be treated with dignity.

At the heart of Jesus' teaching on children is the affirmation that a full representation of Jesus and God is in each child. The child represents the grace that is at the centre of the kingdom of God. For instance, Mark 9:36-37 says, 'And he took a child and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them "whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me"'.

Children's rights have their foundation in the Holy Scripture. Christ himself sets an example by placing the child at the heart of the kingdom of God. In Matthew 18:5-6, Jesus asserts that 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones, who believe in me, to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck

8 Edoardo Quaretta, Children accused of witchcraft in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Between structural and symbolic violence, in: Anuac 8/2 (2019), p. 61–82.

and to be drowned in the depth of the sea'. Here Jesus used a child to teach a very important lesson about the kingdom of God. In Matthew 19:13-15, people brought the children to Jesus, for him to lay his hands on them and say a prayer. The disciples turned them away, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven'. Jesus wants us to honour and value children. Jesus, himself, did not despise children. If we are called to be like Christ, we should also follow his example. Children must be treated as full members and participants in our worship and prayer life.

5. Individual observations

There was a time when witchdoctors in Kinshasa (DR Congo) were on the rise because of their ostensible powers to catch witches. Strangely enough, although witchdoctors are now outdated, we are seeing a rise in the number of revivalist pastors who are using virtually the same techniques to catch witches. William Antwi wrote that, in order to identify or catch witches, witchdoctors often used their shrines for consultations, treatments, divinations or fortune telling.[9] Regardless of how it is done, these witchcraft accusations routinely violate the human rights of the people accused.

Most revivalist pastors have taken advantage of the accusations against these 'witch children' to make money. According to Bengali, the practice of exorcising children has become a lucrative business for pastors and can cost up to six months' salary for the average Congolese citizen.[10] Revivalist pastors have promoted the policy of 'witch children' accusations as a means of maximising their profits. Gary Foxcroft notes that widespread preaching about child witchcraft, demonic possession, deliverance and exorcism in Pentecostal churches has contributed to the huge rise in accusations of witchcraft against children.[11] This is happening at a time, when the Church should be focusing on spreading the good news about the kingdom of God.

Child protection legislation was enacted in the DRC in January 2009. The country is also a signatory to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which states that children are protected from any act of violence. According to David Bodeli Dombi, the law in DRC is explicit; accusing a child of

9 William K. Antwi et al., Behavioural beliefs of Ghanaian radiographers and reporting of child physical abuse, in: Radiography 25/1 (2019), p. 51–57.

10 Cited by Chi Adanna Mgbako / Katharine Glenn, Witchcraft accusations and human rights: Case studies from Malawi, in: George Washington International Law Review 43 (2011), p. 389–417, here: 389.

11 Gary Foxcroft, Hunting witches, in: World Policy Journal 31/1 (2014), p. 90–98.

sorcery is punishable by one to three years of penal servitude.[12] Unfortunately, the government does not implement these laws.

The commitment to raise awareness of these rights and implement them in the public sphere is minimal. Very few Congolese children know about their rights. The few, who do, come from privileged families, whose rights, in any case, are less likely to be violated. The level of ignorance about children's rights is also evident among the general public. This is especially true of the poor, who make up the majority of the population. It is, therefore, important that all stakeholders commit themselves to making huge efforts to raise awareness of children's rights. This will be a starting point for respecting these rights. People cannot respect or claim, what they do not know.

6. Recommendations

The 'witch children' are mostly orphans and albinos, sometimes children of divorced parents who belong to a group of street children. As a result, they are unsupervised in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They lack access to food, shelter, education, and other basic needs, leaving them at risk of abuse and exploitation. This ranges from physical abuse of elders on the street to sexual abuse by sentinels and police at night. There are times when law enforcement personnel (police, military) force them to engage in illegal criminal activities. They have no rights and no access to education, health care or security. Adults exploit them as porters, cleaners, or laborers in their homes and stores, and as workers in mining areas. Street children and child labor are the main challenges in the DRC.

I believe that the suffering of children is something that is close to God's beating heart and makes him grieve deeply. The religious community must protect children by shielding them from all types of force that seek to harm them. This can be done through prayer, advocacy, defending their rights and even direct action such as correct biblical teaching about children's rights. Many other church leaders are working tirelessly to stop this abuse. Here are some recommendations to my Church:

– Conducting a *workshop with church leadership to show public commitment* to the promotion of children's rights, especially through an outcry against churches, clergy, and families who accuse children of witchcraft, abusing and abandoning them.

12 Cited by Laura Heaton, The risks of instrumentalizing the narrative on sexual violence in the DRC: Neglected needs and unintended consequences, in: International Review of the Red Cross 96/894 (2014), p. 625–639.

- *Launching sensitization campaigns,* rallies, and conferences on the theme "*The 'witch child' does not exist*" in churches and schools to make people aware of the importance of the rights of street children.
- *Running trainings and workshops for the clergy at the local level* as well as for Sunday school teachers to make them aware of the children's rights and witch children's challenges.
- *Enhancing the capacity building of JPIC at the national and local levels* on children's rights. Train and educate children, parents, church leaders, the community, and all those involved with children on child protection and safeguarding issues.
- *Maintaining a JPIC unique desk on children's rights with a special mission* related to children's issue. It may initiate investigations into abusive practices or any other violations of children's rights. This cell should serve as a focal point for coordinating awareness campaigns.
- *Promoting street child protection, and monitor law enforcement practices* at national levels, advocate and create awareness of child rights and security among all stakeholders (church leaders, Sunday school teachers, teachers, parents, etc.).Create case management, reporting, and referral mechanisms for addressing abuse cases.
- *Conducting a baseline study as an academic analysis tool* of the current situation of children to identify the starting points of any program to be implement in relation to street children.
- *Developing relevant teaching curricula* that promote the well-being and safety of children at home, school, community, and church, emphasizing the difficult situation of street children.
- *Supporting academic researchers in the field of children's rights* or other cross-cutting fields to help churches accumulate qualifications in various areas to acquire higher qualification to work efficiently for the community.
- *Producing awareness materials on children rights* both in French and local languages. This my include posters, postcards or brochures on "*The 'witch child' does not exist*" and other digital means to spread the message.

7. Conclusion

While human rights are recognised on paper (for example, the UN Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) in many countries today, they are insufficiently protected in practice. States often lack the will or the means to implement justice in the face of human rights abuse. Yet,

knowledge of child rights is very poor within DRC communities, even among the police and Church leadership.

For this reason, the Church, in its role as guardian, will speak out for state structures to be set up where necessary and will warn people that the state is in danger of being weakened, where its scope of action to guarantee children's rights is reduced.

Beliefs related to witchcraft are not necessarily problematic in themselves, but become challenging when they involve accusations leading to acts of persecution, including psychological, emotional and physical abuse, which can eventually even lead to the death of the accused child. My Church has decided not to become involved in the 'child witch' issue, either through teaching or running activities to protect its community against the phenomenon. Maybe this is because my country is having to face up to such major challenges as democracy, governance, elections etc., but there is, nevertheless, a way to warn the community about this issue: through the justice peace, and integrity of creation commission. I am not afraid of facing up to (the grave violation of children's rights, but I am desperately afraid of the deep silence of my church.

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THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE FOR SINGLE PARENTS – CHALLENGES FOR MISSION AND DIAKONIA

Katarina Lange

(Third Prize)

1. Introduction

Let's look briefly at my personal situation: I am a single mum with three kids, working part-time in a coffee shop. But I cannot pay our rent without government support. And I am also studying theology and like going to church. But, on Sundays, my seat in church is often empty, because I am either at work or university. Even though I enjoy being involved in church, I can hardly afford any time for voluntary work. During the time I am able to invest in working, I have to make money. I often feel left out because a lot of what the church offers during the free time I do have available does not correspond to my (temporal) possibilities and needs. So the thoughts in this essay arise out of my own deep dismay.

2. Situation of single parents and questions

In 2020, there were 2,523,000 single parents living in Germany; 435,000 of them were single fathers and 2,088,000 single mothers. Compared to previous years, these numbers are growing.

This group of single parents consists of 743,000 single parents who are 'single', 319,000 are married but separated, 986,000 are divorced and 475,000 are widowed.

Most single parent families (952,000) have a net monthly income of between 700 and 1,400 euros; 817,000 families have between 1,400 and 2,100 euros. The poverty threshold in Germany (as of 2019) is around 1,400 euros for single parents with one child under 14 years of age, and around 1,720 euros for single

parents with two children under 14.[1] It is difficult, if not impossible, for such families to participate in social life.

Single parents do not show up in the statistics of the Evangelical Church in Germany and are not explicitly recorded or counted[2]. Are single parents irrelevant to the work of the Church?

To ensure that the children are looked after, many single parents work part-time. And then the money (with or without government financial support) is just barely enough to make it to the end of the month. Housework and childcare are part of the job. It is just like being a hamster on its wheel, with little recovery time and little or – due to the finances – no holidays at all.

Day-to-day life is dictated by worries! Worries about money! Worries about work! Worries about home! Worries about the children and their future! Never mind the stress with the 'separated parent'. These are all huge psychological strains. Should it not be the role of the Church, here, to open its doors wide and, in the words of Jesus, issue the invitation: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28 NIV)?

Instead, I feel left out of the community! I cannot hear the Good News. Are my needs irrelevant? I, too, need the message of hope and new strength and God's love. And I need the message that God sees me. But then, when it is preached, I am at work or so exhausted that I cannot make it to church. And I also need the community that is there to help one another.

This leads me to the following questions: What message do the Church and the Christian faith have specifically for single parents? What does the Church need to do for single parents in order for it to truly embody and practise inclusion instead of exclusion? And how can the Church help single parents be part of the fellowship?

In my considerations I am referring primarily to single mothers, since, for them, the situation was, and is, even more precarious due to the simple fact that they are women. Women in Germany earn, on average, 18 per cent less than men[3] and do more care work for their children and parents in need of care. That is why there are many low-wage earners among women in part-time jobs.

1 All statistical figures come from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany.
2 Information from the business administration, IT and statistics department of the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany).
3 Federal Statistical Office of Germany.

3. Single parents/mothers in the Bible

The concept of "single parent" or "single mother" is not provided for in the Bible. The Old Testament speaks of women as being dependent on a man. The daughter lived with the father or was looked after by her brothers; the married woman lived with her husband. If the husband died, she was cared for by her sons or married again. The protection of defenceless widows and their survival is emphasised several times in Deuteronomic law.[4] If a woman was divorced, she would return to her family, her father / brothers.[5] Women who worked independently and were financially independent were the exception. They were only viewed as having legal capacity under Roman law.[6] It can be assumed that father and mother were responsible for bringing up the children. Sons learned from fathers, daughters from mothers. In the New Testament, we also encounter women in functions within the congregation. For example, as apostles, deacons or missionaries. From this, it can be concluded that women's influence in the community had grown.[7] Their economic situation had also changed, and we can read about economically successful women, who donated their property and labour to the community. In contrast to ancient society, this created a place of appreciation in the communities. The women were able to contribute and get involved, each in their own way.[8]

In the following, I will look at several women in the bible, who were on their own for various reasons and at how their story can help us.

3.1. Hagar[9]

The slave Hagar was pregnant by Abram and fled from her mistress Sarai to a spring in the desert. The desert is a life-threatening place. It would have cost her life and that of her unborn child. But God sent her an angel who sent her back to Sarai. In Hagar, the suffering experienced is combined with God's hope and promise for numerous offspring[10]. Hagar's realisation from this encounter: You are the God who sees me. "She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You

4 For example Dtn 24:17 ff.

5 See Friedrich Fechter et al, Article Frau/Mann, in: Frank Crüsemann et al, Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch zur Bibel, Gütersloh 2009, p. 151.

6 See Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld et al., Article Wirtschaftsrecht, in: Crüsemann, Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch zur Bibel, p. 659.

7 See Fechter et al., Article Frau/Mann, in: Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch, p. 151.

8 See Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld, Article Wirtschaftssystem, in: Crüsemann, Sozialgeschichtliches Wörterbuch zur Bibel, p. 664 f.

9 Genesis 16.

10 Dorothea Sölle, Gottes starke Töchter. Große Frauen der Bibel, Luzern 2003, p. 18.

are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'" (Genesis 16:13 NIV)

The God who sees. Who looks. That means: He sees the desert times of life, the drought, the dwindling spirits. He sees everyday life and the burdens. A God who sees is balm for the soul where society looks the other way. A God who sees is at eye level. And he understands.

3.2. The widow at Zarephath[11]

In Zarephath, lived a widow with her son who had almost no oil and flour. She wanted to prepare one last meal from what was left over. Then came the prophet Elijah, whom God had sent to this widow. He urged her to take care of him first and promised the widow that God would not let her suffer any more want. "Elijah said to her, 'Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'" (1 Kings 17:13–14 NIV)

A little later her son dies. The one who could have taken care of them when he grew up. The widows' hope and life. But Elijah brings him back to life. In this story, too, we encounter a God who sees. God sees the privation that the widow and her son suffer. He sees what they need and acts. Don't be afraid! Don't be afraid of tomorrow, don't be afraid of the future, God sees you!

3.3. Tabitha

The book of Acts tells the story of Tabitha, that Peter raised her from the dead. We do not learn much about Tabitha herself. Not even if she had a family and children. But the situation around this event is also fascinating. There is mention of a group of widows, who probably made clothes with Tabitha. Or Tabitha made clothes for them.[12] „In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. [...] Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood round him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them." (Ac 9:36;39)

A group of widows, women in the same situation. Socially and economically. They found a source of income sewing clothes and supported each other – cer-

11 1 Kings 17.

12 Ivori Richter Reimer, Frauen in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas, Gütersloh 1992.

tainly also in terms of pastoral care. This is fellowship, support, mutual help and this can arise in a Christian community.

3.4. Conclusion

I draw two conclusions from these biblical passages:

a) The Christian message the Bible conveys in situations, in which women are left to their own devices, outside of society, having to struggle with life and fate, is: God is a God who sees YOU!

b) Christian community means that we look for people, who are in the same situation and support one another. So that life becomes more liveable for all.

If God is a God who sees. A God who sees need and want. And if God sends people and friends to support one another. – If this is true, then what is the task of, and challenge for, the Church? As representative and on behalf of God should the Church not also see the need and the want ? And also support and bring people together, who have difficulty in helping each other on their own? How can the Church do this? I do not think all of my thoughts are new. Certainly not. But they are becoming more and more important. Because the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and because our society is changing, there are more and more single parents, who, with the opportunities we have today, have to move into the Church's focus if wants to become and wants to be future-proof.

4. How can the Church convey its message to single parents in a missionary and diaconal way? The challenge of integration and inclusion

4.1. Integration

The Church needs the integration of single parents. Integration means that the group of single parents is part of the community. Single parents have their place, they are perceived like any other group. And that starts with little things, such as providing space in a cupboard in the community centre for material for group meetings.

4.1.1 Integration and Mission

One important message is that the Christian faith can be a source of strength for everyday life and that God is seen to be supportive and helpful. God sees you and your everyday life, all your worries. If we deal with the issue of "single

parents and Church", we should not only think in terms of supportive diaconal action, but also of providing "soul food" that can build up and empower psychologically. When asked what would be required to get this message across, I believe the growth of digitalisation could open up enormous opportunities. It is not always possible for working single parents to be in church at any given time. But technology makes it possible to celebrate prayers or worship via Zoom. Or record them and see/hear them when it is convenient for you. That may be in the evening, or early in the morning, or while the children are playing quietly. Short church services, especially for single parents and their situation, and with a sermon that focuses on their concerns. Or how about a group on WhatsApp or Telegram or on social media? If I had the time, I could imagine setting up such a group and writing an encouraging sentence, a quote, a song verse every morning. Something to accompany you throughout the day and give you strength. Networking is possible in the local environment, but also beyond.

In order for events in the local community to be meaningful, they must meet various criteria: single parents must be able to bring their children, who can either be present at the event or have an extra children's programme. The time must be compatible with work and the times of school and kindergarten. If you offer a meeting in the late afternoon, it would be worth considering having dinner together afterwards. So that single parents do not have to start making food at home. Meetings that build on each other in terms of content are difficult. Because you will always have to reckon with the fact that not all single parents will always be able to come. It relieves single parents to know: it doesn't matter if I can't always make it. But because I'm always welcome when I am there. I think it is important to enable everyone who wants to come to participate. This means that events should not cost anything. Events for single parents could possibly be financed through donations. Perhaps people from the community, who are not single parents, would also be happy to provide support.

4.1.2 Integration and diakonia

It is important for single parents to have a point of contact if they need help. Help when they do not have enough money. Help with filling out forms. Help when they cannot take the kids to an appointment because they have to work. If the Church wants to be a point of contact for single parents, it needs people, who are familiar with the authorities, who can provide and co-ordinate help. A network is required, in which each person can offer help and ask for help. A personal example: a friend of mine is a hairdresser. She cut my children's hair and mine, for which she received a few euros, which she needed to move home. I bring homemade chocolates to another friend and offer her words of comfort

because her mother has died. This friend looks after my children when I am at university.

4.2. Inclusion

The Church needs the inclusion of single parents. Inclusion means, of course, that single parents can take part in events with the whole community. Here, single parents mix together with senior citizens, choir singers have fellowship with people from the craft group. Everyone is part of the community.

4.2.1 Inclusion and mission

If the Church really wants to embody and practise inclusion, one would have to open up the thoughts from point 4.1. above and expand them. One idea would be to offer hybrid worship services, even after the corona pandemic. For those who can come, the service is in church. But anyone unable to attend, for example through sickness, can celebrate digitally. But even for on-site events, framework conditions could be designed to enable single parents to come. Just like all other parishioners. And sometimes, the person delivering the sermon should ask her or himself: this 'everyday life' I am talking about, is it also the day-to-day reality of the people sitting in front of me? We need sensitive preachers, who also listen when people talk about their worries and needs. And preach the Good News to them.

4.2.2 Inclusion and Diakonia

At this point, too, one can think further about integration.

In this case there would not just be a network among single parents, but across all generations and living conditions. The retired music teacher offering lessons to children who otherwise would not be able to afford it. A single mother baking a cake for another family's birthday. A craftsman helping a senior citizen who is knitting socks for another person for free. There are people, who need more help than others in certain phases of their lives. But the day comes, when you, too, can support someone else. Each person gives what he or she can, each person takes what he or she needs. Is this just an unrealistic ideal of community? An ideal for sure. But not unrealistic. If we take Jesus seriously, Jesus, who celebrated with tax collectors, cared for the sick and blessed children; if we take his words of charity[13] seriously, then we must ask ourselves: who is my neighbour?[14] For some, this neighbour will be a single father or single mother. Yes, but are

13 Mk 12:31.
14 Luke 10:29.

we not already doing all of this? Are there not already projects specifically for single parents or communities where inclusion is embodied and practised? Yes, of course. In Germany, here and there. But that is not enough. There are single parents in every city, in every community. They should also be the focus of every Christian community.

5. Recommendations to the UEM communion

I take it that a great deal is being done in the world to improve women's lives. But there is always talk of "women" in general. That is why I would like single parents to be looked at more specifically and their special situation discussed. Because, even if my insight is limited to single parents in Germany, the problems are so complex (economic, psychological) that they are not likely to be much different in African and Asian countries. Priorities and urgencies may be shifting, but life as a single parent in this world is always a challenge, not to say: downright tough.

Let us tell single parents about God's source of strength, from which they can draw their own.

Let us say to them: do not be afraid! God sees you!

Let us build networks with single parents, in which every woman can contribute through her own resources and gifts. And through which she can receive practical help and support in her day-to-day life.

And let us be Church with its doors open for single parents, who are weary and burdened. In Europe, in Africa, in Asia, all over the world.

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DIVERSITY AND MISSION IN INDONESIA

Challenges of Religious Diversity and Reconstruction of Mission in the Midst of Diversity

Rut Debora Butarbutar

1. Diversity and its problems

Diversity is inevitable. No one is able to stop or reject diversity. It exists everywhere, also in Indonesia. Indonesia is known as a country of diversity, with respect to religion, ethnicity, language, culture and so on. In this essay, I will focus on religious diversity. Accordingly, whenever I use the word diversity, I am referring to religious diversity. Six religions are recognised in Indonesia: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. In accordance with data from the Indonesia Central Statistics Agency (2019), these can be broken down as follows: Muslims 87.18 per cent of the total population (or 217,176,162 people), Protestants 6.96 per cent (16,528,513), Catholics 2.91 per cent (6,907,873), Hindus 1.69 per cent (4,012,116), Buddhists 0.72 per cent (117,091), others 0.51 per cent (1,196,317).

On the basis of this data, it can be said that the intensity of encounters between followers of different religions is increasingly unavoidable. Diversity has become a characteristic of the essence of the world and of contemporary society. Diversity is not something and is found even in the smallest context. The community will encounter forms of diversity, whether in neighbourhoods, markets, shopping centres, offices and many other public places. Each person has the opportunity to directly touch and experience diversity. The world can be described as a small village, in which religious people live together.[1]

Religious people do not always give a friendly response when addressing the reality of diversity. This is because religion is one of the determinants of a person's identity, and each religious community brings its own religion into the public sphere. This often triggers a hardening of identity, which creates an ingroup-outgroup scenario, in which anyone from the same religion is a friend

1 Th. Sumartana, Theologia Religium, in: Tim Balitbang PGI (ed.), Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama Di Indonesia, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2007, p. 18.

while anyone from a different religion is an enemy. As a result, diversity is often coloured by the problem triggered by the unwillingness to grant permission for the building of new churches. This was a problem experienced by Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI), one of the Lutheran Churches in Indonesia. In some HKI churches, construction permits were not granted by the local community, in which other religions were in the majority. The community even demolished or burned down church buildings, which had existed for several years. Some churches also received construction stops from the local government because of complaints from people of other religions.

In brief, this essay will mention how the HKI is under pressure, because they operate in an environment, in which other religions are in the majority. I will only mention three churches, here, based on the validity of information I have received. The three churches are the HKI Samarinda, HKI Suka Makmur-Singkil, and HKI Simpang Rimbo-Jambi. The HKI Samarinda was established on 1st February 2015 on land designated for public facilities belonging to the Bukit Temindung Indah housing estate, Samarinda. They had difficulty collecting a sufficient number of community signatures, due to the fact that most of the local population were adherents of other religions. On 27th June 2015, this church was sealed by the government in response to demands from the community around the church. Two days after this, the HKI Samarinda was finally demolished by the local residents. The HKI Suka Makmur Singkil was established in 1998 in the village of Suka Makmur in Gunung Meriah, Aceh Singkil. The HKI Suka Makmur was established on land belonging to a member of the HKI, which is near a settlement of residents belonging to other religions. Although the church has existed for many years, it is still trying to obtain a building permit. Local residents did not easily provide their signatures as proof of agreement with construction. In October 2015, the HKI Suka Makmur was burned down by members of other religious organisations together with the local community. The HKI Simpang Rimbo-Jambi was established in 2010. Since then, it has been attempting to obtain a building permit. Similarly to the HKI Suka Makmur, the HKI Simpang Rimbo also faced difficulty in acquiring signatures of approval from the community around the church. On 25th September 2018, the community held a demonstration against the local government, demanded the closure of the HKI and the other churches that were built without permits. Community pressure left the local government with no alternative. On 27th September 2018, the Jambi city government decided to seal the HKI and two other churches.

The experiences of these three churches were only a small fraction of the pressure they experienced in a context marked by diversity and the exclusivity

of other religions. However, exclusivity does not only manifest itself in other religions but in Christianity, too. Churches often fail to respond appropriately to diversity. Martin Lukito Sinaga, an Indonesian pastor and theologian of religions, stated in his book, '*Beriman dalam Dialog: Esai-Esai tentang Tuhan dan Agama*', that, in general, the Church has an exclusive theology and that, within the Church, there is an attitude of strengthening the fortress of institutions, which sees diversity as an opportunity to increase the number of church congregations.[2] This church exclusivism manifests itself in a mission that aims to multiply the number of churches, by poaching members from other religions or other church congregations. This also adds to the problems of diversity.

Based on the formulation of the problems above, this paper will seek to show how diversity should be addressed, and how the Church should carry out its mission in a context of diversity. It will also limit itself to diversity as seen from a Christian perspective, since it is difficult to determine the views of other religions without first suitably engaging in constructive dialogue and mutual recognition. This could possibly provide a view that is not objectively in accordance with their religious teachings.

2. Trinitarian pneumatology: Acceptance of others

The Doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental teaching in Christianity. It has recently become a central topic, discussed by theologians in its relation to diversity. This doctrine is used to answer challenges of the reality of diversity. The trinity offers criteria for identifying God in the Bible and its relationship with the world and with other religions.[3]

The trinity is the communion of three persons connected through the relationship of giving and taking. Those three person are united in communion. The Triune God is a communion of love in three equal persons.[4] The unity of the Triune God is present in the communion of three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No existence can be imagined in each person as an individual. Each person within the communion of the Trinity cannot exist without unity, and the communion of the Triune God cannot eliminate the three persons. The

2 Martin Lukito Sinaga, Beriman Dalam Dialog: Esai-Esai Tentang Tuhan Dan Agama, Jakarta, Indonesia: BPK Gunung Mulia 2018, p. 57.

3 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Christian Understandings of the Trinity: The Historical Trajectory, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 2017, p. 1.

4 Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse, New York: Crossroad 2002, p. 206.

communion of the Triune God is not a relationship to be understood in terms of personal gain. In this communion, the divine substance does not limit the existence of three persons of the Trinity.[5]

The communion allows the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to exist simultaneously without interfering with each other. The existence is based on the three persons of the Trinity, but each still possesses its own uniqueness.[6] The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely indistinguishable from each other by their characters as persons. They are united in one another because personal characteristics and community characteristics are only two aspects of the same thing. The personal concept must contain the concept of unity, while the concept of God's oneness must contain the concept of three persons itself.[7]

The approach of Trinitarian pneumatology is an approach, which sees the work of the Holy Spirit in history, within the framework of the communion of the Trinity. The Triune God – three persons connected to each other in fellowship – is freely present in history through the Holy Spirit, calling the Church to see the work of the Triune God in the world. This approach is rooted in the theology of the relationship of the communion of the Trinity. Any work performed by each person of the Triune God must, therefore, be seen as 'collective work'. Separating the work of each person is a betrayal of the communion of the Trinity. The relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the basis for God's identity as presented in history. This relationship introduces the relation of the Triune God with history in the incarnation and salvation.[8]

God's Spirit is not only active in the work of redemption through the Son, but continues to exist and work in the world. The work of salvation of the Trinity is present in the spirituality and reality through the presence of the Holy Spirit that communicates salvation to all humanity. Thus, the Trinity is connected to the world through the Spirit working actively in an infinite space.[9] The Triune God, in the presence of the Spirit, also works throughout creation, the life of society

5 Jean Zizioulas, Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church, Contemporary Greek Theologians, Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985, p. 17.
6 Interview by Viktor J. Toth, 'A Theology of Everything' for a Pluralistic World, in: ChristianityToday.Com (November 19, 2019), https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/february-web-only/veli-matti-krkkinen-interview-theology-of-everything.html.
7 Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God, London: SCM Press 2005.
8 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, How to Speak of the Spirit among Religions: Trinitarian 'Rules' for a Pneumatological Theology of Religions, in: International Bulletin of Missionary Research 30/3 (2006), p. 121–127.
9 Toth, Theology.

and in other religions.[10] The Spirit also works outside the churches to reach all spaces in history.[11]

The Church is a fellowship built in the presence of the Holy Spirit. It has an integral relationship with God. In this relationship, the Church is a sign of God's coming to fulfil his purpose. However, this relationship does not mean that the Church is bound to the work of the Holy Spirit. The integral relationship between the Church and the presence of the Triune God within it, must be understood as a calling to the Church to participate in realising the relational fellowship of God with the world, and with other religions.[12]

The Church must be open to seeing the possibility of the external work of the Spirit; if it does not, it will lose the possibility of God's other blessings. This is the basis of the openness of Christianity to other religions that might be achieved by engaging in dialogue with others. Through dialogue, Christianity can bring the Church to a more honest knowledge of the Triune God.[13] Therefore, it can be said that the presence of the Holy Spirit in history requires Christianity to defend its truth and, on the other hand, to show its openness to the grace of the Spirit outside the Church.

Dialogue facilitates opportunities for mutual learning among religious members. In particular, dialogue enables Christians to get to know each other and others. Dialogue shuns monologue and opens up critical engagement.[14] The Church must be prepared to give of itself to others without losing its identity. Christianity testifies the truth of the Triune God and, at the same time, is willing to learn from others. In summary, the openness to other religions through dialogue will bring the Church to a more honest knowledge of the Triune God.[15]

10 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Spirit and Salvation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing 2016, p. 179.

11 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen / Kirsteen Kim /Amos Yong, Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, p. 34.

12 Kärkkäinen, Christian Understandings; Kärkkäinen / Kim / Yong, Discourses, p. 175.

13 Kärkkäinen, Christian Understandings, p. 75.

14 Gavin D'Costa, The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity: Faith Meets Faith, Faith Meets Faith, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books 2000, p. 9.

15 Velli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Divine Hospitality and Communion: A Trinitarian Theology of Equality, Justice, and Human Flourishing, in: Revisioning, Renewing, and Rediscovering the Triune Center, Eugene, Or: An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers 2014, p. 417.

3. Mission in the midst of diversity: From church planting to the hospitality of the Triune God

Mission is the identity of the Church. A church without mission cannot be said to be a church.[16] The Church, as a community led by God, must be involved in carrying out God's mission in the world. In its implementation, the Church understands mission exclusively and traditionally. The Church's mission is to fulfil the interests of the Church as a worldly institution, for example by increasing the number of churches. Mission, which focuses on increasing the number of churches and church members, instead of converting souls, is known as the church planting model.[17] In general, this mission is carried out by determining a specific location or a group of people to be evangelised. One other goal of the church planting model is to gain power and to have a large outreach, which differs from the original meaning of mission. This model seems to seek the conversion of everyone to Christianity.[18]

The mission model of church planting, consciously or not, is widely adopted by cotemporary churches, even amid the reality of diversity. This causes the Church to be trapped in interpreting diversity as an object. The Church turns diversity into a place of evangelism to attract other people to become Christians or even become members of the Church.[19] The Church also seems to have concerns that the population of the world is growing faster than the natural growth of its own membership, which means it could become even more or a minority.[20] The implementation of this kind of mission also adds to the negative views of other religions towards Christianity. Religious people seem to compete to increase the number of their followers. The Church, in the end, is not carrying out God's mission or finding solutions to social problems. Instead, it is more likely to be escalating the problems in society. If this mission continues, the Church will actually betray its calling to carry out God's mission of bringing universal salvation and establishing peace in society. Thus, in this paper, I will present a model of mission that is relevant in a context, in which

16 Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia, Memberitakan Injil di Tengah Masyarakat Majemuk: Tiga Dokumen Kontemporer Gerejawi, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2018, p. 81.
17 Raja Oloan Tumanggor, Misi Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk, Jakarta: Genta Pustaka Lestari 2014, p. 5.
18 David Jacobus Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books 2011, p. 333.
19 Susanto Hery, Gereja Yang Berfokus Pada Gerakan Misioner, in: Fidei: Jurnal Teologi Sistematika Dan Praktika 2 (2019), p. 62–83.
20 Purnawan Tenibemas, Andil Kita dalam Misi Masa Kini, in: Pengarah: Jurnal Teologi Kristen 1 (2019), p. 23–36.

the Church is rooted in diversity, namely the mission of the hospitality of the Triune God.

Since the teachings of the Trinity I will use have become the basis for the Church's response to diversity, I will also base this mission on these teachings. The Trinity shows true hospitality, namely a reciprocal relation of giving and taking and is also an expression of the community in diversity.[21] There are three persons, inseparable from one another, because of the essence of their unity and three persons, who mutually open up space for each other.[22] The hospitality that occurs in the communion of the Trinity continues in God's acceptance of this world. The Triune God embraces the world in his acceptance and best work.[23]

The Triune God reaches the world in the infinite presence to save holistically. The Spirit, through the communion of the Trinity, creates a community in the ministry of kingdom involving the Church. The hospitality of the Triune God is both a gift and a calling. The Trinity reveals his presence that creates his reconciliation with the world. At the same time, the Church is called to a pattern of life that reflects participation. This participation continues to the proclamation of the Gospel involving the Church.[24]

The important aspect of mission is to continue God's mission in the world. God's hospitality must be manifested in the Church' mission to present honest, authentic news and to be prepared to accept each other in love and to respect differences.[25] The Church must be prepared to accept various religious concepts of truth; this is possible because the Triune God is present in each religion in different ways. In this case, each religion needs to avoid claiming it has the one, exclusive truth.[26] Religious people meet together and engage in dialogue, adhering to the principle that there is no pre-meeting judgments or prejudice and that all religions are in the same position, namely, to learn from each other.[27]

Based on the Church's identity as the bearer of God's mission, Christian mission must be implemented with respect for other religions and have moral in-

21 Kärkkäinen, Divine Hospitality, p. 138, 142.

22 Joas Adiprasetya, An Imaginative Glimpse: Trinitas Dan Agama-Agama, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2018, p. 148.

23 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction, Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing 2019, p. 67.

24 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing 2013, p. 360.

25 Kärkkäinen, Christian Theology.

26 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Hope and Community: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, Grand Rapids, Mi: Eerdmans Publishing 2017, p. 50.

27 Roger Trigg, Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions, Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 2014, p. 114.

tegrity. Mission must not abuse power or use violence, whether verbally, psychologically or physically.[28] It does not have to be fundamentalist, in the sense that its main purpose is not to affirm its truth, which other religions have to accept, but through dialogue, to inform one another about the truth. Personal pursuit and communal pursuit are critically united. Testimony to the preaching of the Gospel cannot be achieved through compulsion, but be guided by friendliness and the preparedness to learn from each other. Here, the mandate of God's hospitality is open, in itself, and seeks to foster inclusivism in interaction with other religions.[29] Each person involved can give his or her testimony not only with enthusiasm and humility but with confidence without any claim of absoluteness or resistance to others.

Hospitality, which is adopted from the openness among the persons of the Trinity, and the openness of the Triune God to the world, encourages the Church to accept others and open up preaching and reciprocal dialogue. Mission in hospitality is a form of preaching, in which diversity is recognised as a part of God's work in history. Mission is not in competition with other religions. Its main purpose, therefore, is not church planting or Christianisation but to express God's care for the whole world.[30]

Diversity is not an object but a counter-object. In other words, the existence of other religions is dynamic and demands a process of connection from Christianity to someone or something outside itself. Christianity cannot impose its teachings on others when it denies their existence and true differences in diversity. When people from different religions meet one another, the meeting of true missionaries is very possible.[31]

4. Suggestion and Recommendation

Based on the explanation above, the Church needs to embrace a theological view that accommodates the existence of other religions and carries out its mission in a relevant manner in the midst of diversity. The Church must show acceptance of diversity and redefine an exclusive and traditional understanding of mission. I realise that a change like this is not easy, since the Church has become accustomed to living with an inherited understanding of mission that is passed on from year to year. The greatest challenge may come from the unpreparedness of

28 Kärkkäinen, Hope and Community, p. 454.
29 Ibid.
30 Bosch, Transforming Mission, p. 335.
31 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Theologies of Religions, in: Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World Christian Mission among Other Faiths, Great Britain: TJ International LTD 2010, p. 116.

the congregation and pastors to adopt a new understanding and reality. However, concrete steps must be taken to re-examine the understanding of the Church and reconstruct in a way that enables it to be relevant to diversity.

To the UEM fellowship Churches, in general, and HKI Churches, in particular, I recommend that they continue to explore their theological understanding, renew it no matter what, to ensure that it becomes more relevant to social reality and diversity and is able to answer problems occurring in the public sphere. The Church must be able to accommodate diversity and remain faithful in showing its identity, part of which is faithfully carrying out its missionary calling. The biggest challenges posed by diversity are the hardening of identity, rejection or the attempts to make it difficult to build new churches. The Church must continue to declare its presence in public spaces, by seeking to resolve social problems. The Church can continue to carry out its calling to mission without rushing to build 'another church'. The main goal of mission is to present God's kingdom; the goal is not institutional. The Church can slowly seek physical establishment after it has proved itself to be successful in finding solutions to social issues and demonstrated its openness to diversity.

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CHURCH AS AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

People's Opinions on Participation, Christian Weddings, Pastoral Ministry and Transparency in Rwandan Protestant Churches

Abel Dufitumukiza[1]

Abstract

This paper attempts to explore people's opinions on the extent to which Protestant churches radiate inclusiveness throughout their services. The focus was on (i) the level of members' participation in different church activities and leadership, (ii) officiating at Christian weddings, (iii) pastoral ministry and (iv) transparency in the recruitment and appointment of church workers. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected from a sample of 88 members of different Protestant churches using a questionnaire comprising open and close-ended questions. Frequency tables and percentages were used as data analysis techniques to record and present quantitative data, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. The findings revealed the churches' strengths and weaknesses in their treatment and integration of people belonging to different groups. The study concluded that Protestant churches in Rwanda are struggling to build an inclusive community, also within their own church structures. Such issues as gender inequality, the exclusion and ex-communication of members accused of sinning against God and the discrimination of people with disabilities are some of the weaknesses inhibiting the churches' efforts to create an inclusive community, in which each person feels cared for and valued. Churches are called to promote the celebration of people's differences and organise regular dialogue on a range of topics that can lead to misunderstandings and disagreements.

Keywords: *Church, inclusive society, participation, Christian weddings, Rwandan Protestant churches*

1 Abel Dufitumukiza passed away on 24 July 2021.

1. Introduction

A church, as an organisation, is made of different believers from different categories of people. These include children, youth, women and men, poor and rich as well as people with and without disabilities. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12–31, the church is like a body, made up of many parts, with each part playing its own role or function to ensure the body functions properly. The concept of the church as a unit made up of many parts provides a persuasive argument to ensure that no one is left behind throughout all the functions and life of a church. This implies that a church should be an organisation that radiates love, inclusion and a strong sense of belonging to all its members.

The example of the human body comprising many parts with different shapes, functions and roles coexisting in strongly independent interrelatedness and harmony should act as inspiration to ensure that no member of a church is excluded or rejected for any reason whatsoever. Paul called on the community of believers to regard one another as children of God (see Galatians 3:26). This implies that believers should place more emphasis on what they have in common and learn to celebrate their differences. This deliberation brings me, as a Rwandan, to wonder how the Genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 could possibly have happened in a country, in which 90 per cent of the population is Christian.

Anna Obura (2003)[2] stated that discrimination and exclusion were rampant in the Rwandan education system. Admission to secondary education between 1962 and 1994 was based on regional and ethnic quotas. It is ludicrous that discriminatory ideology was also present in schools affiliated to Protestant churches. Furthermore, the recent publication 'Good governance … where do Rwandan churches stand?' by the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) (2017)[3] indicates that, in contrast to their male counterparts, many women in Protestant churches do not enjoy the same right to be ordained. In the churches, in which women can be ordained as pastors, very few are given the opportunity to enter top leadership positions. All these indicators may show that, although churches are called to build inclusive community, they still have a long way to go to integrate every member into church activities and leadership positions.

It is against this background that this research was undertaken to identify how lay Christians and pastors viewed members' participation, Christian weddings, pastoral ministry and transparency in Rwandan Protestant Churches.

2 Anna Obura, Never Again: Education Reconstruction in Rwanda (Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning/UNESCO, 2003).

3 PIASS, Good Governance: Participation, Transparency, Accountability and other Virtues. Where do Rwandan Churches Stand? PIASS Publication Series No 8 (2017).

2. Objectives of the study

This study seeks to explore the extent to which Protestant churches observe the principles pf participation and inclusion as a means of building an inclusive society. The study was delimited to participation in church activities and leadership, officiating at Christian weddings, pastoral ministry and transparency.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey approach, involving quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection. Data were collected from 88 research participants using an online questionnaire comprising open and close-ended questions. The sample consisted of a bishop, a president of the presbytery, 22 pastors, 9 deacons, 9 Christian representatives, 13 evangelists and 33 lay Christians involved in various church activities. With regard to participation in the survey, women accounted for 34.1 percent and men 65.9 per cent; in terms of church affiliation, 46.6 per cent were Anglican, 34.1 per cent Pentecostal, 18.1 per cent Presbyterian and 1.1 per cent Methodist. Furthermore, most research participants (94.3 per cent) were married and 98.8 per cent had a university education. Returned questionnaires were analysed using frequency tables and percentages for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

4. Results

This section presents the respondents' perception of how well churches integrate[4] children, youth, women and men, as well as people with disabilities into different church activities and leadership organs as a way of inculcating a culture of inclusiveness.

Table 1: Ratings of the extent to which people are integrated into, and valued in, church activities

Category of church members	Very low	Low	High	Very high
Children	36.4	38.6	19.3	5.7
Youth	3.4	44.3	38.6	13.6

4 In this research paper, integration refers to the act of ensuring a strong sense of belonging and an equal opportunity to participate in different activities and the institutional structure.

Women	0.0	27.3	43.2	29.5
Men	1.1	12.5	23.9	62.5
People with disability	62.5	18.2	13.6	5.7
Overall rating (per cent)	**25.9**	**28.2**	**27.7**	**23.4**

Table 1 indicates that of all the church member categories, men are considered to be most integrated into, or engaged in, different church activities, as expressed by 86.4 per cent of respondents. They were followed by women and youth, with 72.7 and 52.2 per cent respectively. People with disabilities are most excluded from different church activities, as expressed by 80.7 per cent of respondents. Although many churches organised Sunday services for children, 75.0 per cent of respondents held the view that children are not integrated into, or valued in, church activities. Male church members dominate diverse church activities. The overall rating of the extent, to which people from different groups are valued in different church activities, revealed that 54.1 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that certain categories of church members are not integrated into, or valued in, different church activities: people with disabilities and children. The exclusion of children is a consequence of a cultural attitude that believes that children have nothing to say, especially among adults. Such an attitude is similar to that of Jesus' disciples, who excluded children from Jesus' ministry in the belief that children had no rightful place. They tried to turn away the children and their parents when they came to Jesus requesting a blessing for their children (Mark 10:13–16). Another factor contributing to the exclusion of children in the church is the churches' lack of such basic facilities as study rooms, seats and writing material for children. In some churches, although children do come to Sunday services, they have to stay outside and play because of the lack of space inside.

This is illustrated by one respondent with visual difficulties:

"*One day, my pastor invited me to do the Sunday readings. He was not aware that I have a severe visual disability. I copied the bible verses on paper using braille to be able to read them. The first question was 'where is your bible?' I replied that I will use this paper. This was a shock for the pastor. After I had performed my readings, people in the church applauded as it was a big miracle to see a person with a visual disability performing a reading. Since that time, I have not been invited to do the same, and I do not know why. Simply none is caring for us. At least I can hear sermons, what about those who have hearing and speaking difficulties? Did Jesus die for them? Honestly, we are excluded from*

church activities, except a few who have special gifts despite their disabilities"

In the 2004 interim statement from the World Council of Churches (WCC), "People with disabilities are seen as weak and needing care. As a result, they are viewed as objects for charity, those who receive what other persons give. Thus, people with disabilities cannot meet other people in the churches on equal terms. They are regarded as somehow less than fully human"[5]. This means that most people with disabilities are excluded from church activities party due to the cultural preconception that considers disability a curse, but also because many believe that people with disabilities are incapable and, thus, have nothing to contribute to the community.

Table 2: Ratings of the extent to which people participate in church management and leadership organs

	Very low	Low	High	Very high
Children	0	73.9	21.6	4.5
Youth	15.9	48.9	31.8	3.4
Women	4.5	39.8	37.5	18.2
Men	1.1	4.5	17.0	77.3
People with disability	71.6	14.8	9.1	4.5
Overall rating (per cent)	**23.3**	**36.4**	**23.4**	**21.6**

The data in Table 2 show that people with disabilities, children and youth participate less in church management and leadership organs, as expressed by 86.4, 73.9 and 64.8 per cent respectively. Although 94.3 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that men dominate church management and leadership organs, 55.7 per cent confirmed the participation of women in church leadership organs. But the overall result reveals the imbalance of participation in church management and leadership organs. Men dominate church leadership, while people with disabilities are most excluded.

5 Arne Fritzson / Samuel Kabue, Interpreting Disability: A Church of All and for All, WCC Publication, Geneva 2004, p. 68–69.

Table 3: Ratings of inclusion by gender

	Very low level	Low level	Neither high nor low	High level	Very high level
Indicate the level, at which women participate in decision-making organs and leadership in comparison with men	15.9	19.3	30.7	26.1	8.0

Table 3 shows that respondents had divided opinions about the level, at which women, compared to their male counterparts, participate in church decision-making organs and leadership: 35.2 per cent (low / very low level) as opposed to 34.1 per cent (high / very high level). "*It is not possible to hand over this church to the hands of women. This will be the end of what we have been building for so long,*" said one male respondent, who was a Christian representative. This suggests that respect for gender equality principles is still being challenged by male domination in different Protestant churches in Rwanda. It is doubtful whether churches comply with the 30 per cent quota of women working in different organs, including the pastoral ministry. Even though the Rwandan government has been promoting women, it is important to note that, in many denominations in Rwanda, women are still excluded from church leadership positions. This is due to prevalent cultural attitudes towards woman: that their place is in the home and not in the public sphere. For some Rwandans, women's power is perceived negatively. Some justify this saying, for example, "*urugo ruvuze umugore ruvuga umuhoro*" – i.e. a house lead by a woman will have conflicts. This is reinforced by several Biblical verses (e.g. 1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 3:1–5) that hinder women in leadership positions.

Table 4: Ratings of inclusion according to economic status

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To what extent do you agree / disagree that poor and rich people receive equal consideration in church activities and leadership positions?	25.0	28.4	22.7	21.6	2.3

The findings in table 4 reveal that inequalities in the churches are not only found among men and women. Poor and rich people in different churches are also considered differently with respect to church activities and leadership positions. This was expressed by 53.4 per cent of respondents compared to 23.9 per cent who believed that poorer and wealthier people were treated in a similar manner. This suggests that some members do not experience a strong sense of belonging in the church, since they are not valued as highly as their rich brothers and sisters in Christ.

People's views on the organisation and management of Christian weddings
Rwandans regard weddings as one of the key components that create solid cohesion among people. This focuses attention on assessing how people view the organisation of Christian weddings and their impact on the promotion of an inclusive society.

Table 5: Opinions on Christian weddings

	Very bad	Bad	Neither good nor bad	Good	Very good
How does your church regard inter-denominational marriage?	12.5	12.5	30.7	34.1	10.2
How do you regard the marriage of pregnant women?	27.3	12.5	37.5	14.8	8.0
How would you describe the pregnancy test before marriage to ensure that the bride is not pregnant?	39.8	10.2	20.5	6.8	22.7
How would you describe prohibiting the marriage of pregnant women but allowing the marriage of those, who had committed adultery but were not pregnant on their wedding day?	56.8	10.2	17.0	3.4	12.5

With respect to interdenominational marriage, the data in Table 5 shows that 44.3 per cent of respondents expressed a positive attitude, 30.7 per cent were neither for nor against, while 25.0 per cent rejected it. Qualitative data revealed that some churches still condemn members if they choose to marry someone from another church or who does not want to change his/her denomination. Some respondents reported cases of people not going ahead with their marriage because of the denominational differences.

> *"In my church, no one could support you openly when marrying someone from another denomination. The church management stops you and punishes any member who participates in the wedding. This is horrible".*

With regard to women, who have been tested positive for pregnancy before marriage, 37.5 per cent of respondents were undecided as to whether they should be allowed a Christian wedding. On the other hand, 29.5 per cent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the organisation of Christian weddings for

pregnant women, while a few respondents considered the marriage of pregnant women as not an issue for the church. Opinions on the issue are divided. For some, allowing pregnant women to marry in a Christian church is perceived as a contradiction of the teachings of abstinence and the principles for good believers. According to them, this is "purifying" adultery and, accordingly, reject this kind of Christian wedding. For others, a Christian wedding for believers, who failed to wait until after they were married, is one way of helping people to reflect on their guilt and to repent.

> *"I am a pastor, I accept Christian weddings for my believers, who failed to wait until the marriage. Before the official marriage, I organise several counselling sessions with them. These people feel guilty and ashamed about breaching church rules and Rwandan culture. This is the time they need the church; it is not the time to reject and condemn them. I usually ask them to repent and then accept their marriage."*

Most respondents (50.0 per cent) condemned pregnancy tests before marriage to ensure that the bride is not pregnant. Both female and male respondents regard such tests as discrimination against women. In their opinion, a man is always behind every pregnant woman. So why is there a test for women only? Some respondents showed dissatisfaction by explaining that the test does not actually reveal who has committed adultery. The sin, therefore, is not becoming pregnant; the sin is adultery. However, supporters (29.5 per cent) of pregnancy tests before Christian weddings explained that it is a way of discouraging young people from committing adultery and going against church discipline. Other respondents (20.5 per cent) remained undecided as to whether pregnancy tests before marriage are ethically acceptable. Opinion on the topic remains divided. For example, 67.0 per cent of respondents expressed strong disagreement with the idea of rejecting the marriage of pregnant women but allowing the marriage of those who had committed adultery but were not pregnant on their marriage day.

The findings revealed that 37.5 per cent gave testimony that their churches accept the Christian wedding of pregnant women; 30.7 per cent testified that their churches do not accept such marriage at all; while 15.9 per cent showed that their churches accept the Christian wedding of pregnant women with some conditions. These conditions may include repentance in front of a congregation, celebrating a Christian wedding without a bridal veil etc.

Views on pastoral care ministry

Table 6: Ratings of pastoral care ministry

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Church mechanisms to counsel those, who have sinned, are based on love	6.8	22.7	35.2	21.6	13.6
	Not true at all	**Not true**	**Sometimes**	**True**	**Very true**
Some church members are afraid of their leaders and choose not to visit or co-operate with a member, whom leaders have pronounced guilty	10.2	18.2	38.6	19.3	13.6

The findings in the above table indicate that it is doubtful whether the church mechanisms employed to deal with those who have sinned against God or not followed church discipline are driven by love. Some respondents (35.2 per cent) believed that church leadership dealt in a fair, loving way with members, who infringe the church's rules and regulations. However, 29.5 per cent of respondents disagreed that church mechanisms dealing with members infringing church discipline or ethical values are based on love. Instead, the member is punished through excommunication, rejection or exclusion from different church activities. In this regard, it can be said that, instead of being an inclusive community, the church has become more judgemental. People have been hurt by some church leaders, who claim they are only exercising church discipline. This is a call for the church to remember that the mission of God to humanity is to proclaim God's love to the sinners instead of excluding them.

Views on transparency and justice in the recruitment and appointment of church workers

Table 7: Ratings of transparency and justice

	Not true at all	Not true	Sometimes	True	Very true
Recruitment and appointment of church workers is transparent and skill-based	12.5	13.6	46.6	21.6	5.7

The largest group of respondents (46.6 per cent) expressed the view that transparency and justice in the recruitment, selection and appointment of church works are sometimes respected. Otherwise, opinions on whether the recruitment and appointment of church workers is transparent are divided, with 27.3 disagreeing and 26.1 per cent agreeing. This indicates that churches are failing to be a light to, and salt in, the world. This lack of transparency casts doubt on whether the church respects the different principles of good governance. Moreover, the lack of transparency and justice in human resource management thereby becomes a barrier to promoting the inclusive society that people want.

5. Theological implications of the findings

The WCC's interim statement on disability stated that, "the church has been a constituent part of the world where we have set up walls. Walls that shut people in or shut people out. Walls that prevent people from meeting and talking to others. Walls that keep too many people from participating fully in life"[6]. In this regard, the findings of this study issue a theological challenge to identify how the church can become an inclusive community and how it can contribute to building an inclusive society. With regard to Christian responsibility, it is part of exercising compassion and love for others in a tangible way (see Acts 14:13–23, Matthew 25:35). Christians should feed the hungry, comfort the anguished and visit the sick. According to Matthew 28:19–20, the responsibility of a Christian is to spread the Gospel and make disciples. But as expressed by the Lausanne Covenant in 1974 and Manila Manifesto in 1989, Christians have

6 Fritzson/Kabue, Interpreting Disability, p. 63.

neglected evangelism and social concern for so long and sometimes regarded them as being mutually exclusive[7]. If God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people, we should, therefore, share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and the liberation of men and women from every kind of injustice. Because men and women are created in God's image, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, gender or age, has an intrinsic dignity, for which he or she should be respected and served, and not exploited. Thus, Christians must demonstrate God's love visibly, by caring for those, who are discriminated against and those deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter. The proclamation of God's kingdom of justice and peace calls the church to address all forms of injustice and oppression, both personal and structural. The church is also called to raise its prophetic voice on behalf of those who suffer from injustice.

The lack of inclusiveness, equity and transparency hampers the prophetic role of the church in the country. The church loses credibility and should not raise its voice against diverse forms of economic and political injustice within society, if the same injustices are being committed within its own structures. Moreover, if the principles of transparency, good governance, inclusiveness and justice were not applied within the church, the church risk losing its mission. According to the Bible, religion is null and void if it fails to promote justice, equity and human rights. For example, Amos condemns and rejects worship clothed in ostentatious religious rites, while society turns a blind eye to robbery, corruption, oppression of the poor, violence and social injustice. (Amos 3:4–12; 5:12–14.21–24). Isaiah says that the true religion is the one that advocates on behalf of the "*prophetic trilogy*"; in other words, that which protects the widows, the orphans and the emigrants (Isaiah 3:16–24; 5:11–12).

The findings also confirm the domination of patriarchal and hierarchal cultures in the church. Women are given celebration roles and denied leadership roles. Our culture never questions the fact that women can serve meals well at home, so why would it be so difficult for them to serve in the Church in the same capacities as men? Inclusion is, therefore, not a matter of whether one can or cannot, but of why one can or cannot. The convincing answer will pave the way towards a just society, in which anyone fulfilling the terms and conditions of any position will be able to participate fully in the church and wider society.

7 Robert A. Hunt, The History of the Lausanne Movement, 1974-2010, in: International Bulletin of Missionary Research 35/2 (2011), p. 81–85.

6. Recommendations

- Churches should formulate and adopt policies that promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in different church activities and leadership positions. UEM should enable member churches in Rwanda to establish inclusion policies through the provision of expertise.
- Churches should set up a special Sunday for people with disabilities to lead different activities as a way of empowering them.
- Churches should set up administrative and leadership frameworks that give equal rights and opportunities to male and female, children and youth to participate actively in church activities and leadership organs.
- Churches should condemn any discrimination based on gender, age, disability and economic status.
- Churches should create a space for dialogue on the issue of interdenominational weddings.
- Churches should re-examine how pregnant women are treated before Christian weddings. Condemning pregnant women to hell should be stopped. These people should be regarded as individuals, who, more than ever, need love and compassion.
- UEM should facilitate its church members to set up a monitoring and support system to gather information on compliance with the main principles that lead to an inclusive society.
- The churches should conduct a baseline study on the current status of inclusion and belonging among UEM church members. UEM should provide the expertise, while the churches should provide resources. This should include a theological, biblical and pastoral reflection on the doctrine applied by the church to exclude members from participating in its ministries.

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A NATIONAL CHURCH FOR ALL THE NATION OR ALL NATIONS?

Hermeneutics for an Inclusive and Missiological Community through the Eyes of a Village Priest in the Church of Norway (CofN)

Bjarte Hetlebakke

1. Introduction: Meeting with a family before baptism

> *'Hello, is there anybody here?' A mother, with a new-born baby in a pram and a distant looking spouse, is standing bewildered at the entrance of the church. The last time she was here was for her own confirmation, or maybe to attend a funeral. Her spouse, who comes from a village further away, is stepping into the church he belongs to for the first time, looking as if he has the usual 'this is a waste of time' scepticism of what lies ahead: an hour-long conversation with the pastor.*

They have just had their first child, becoming a family with loads of new things to learn and do. And, on top of this, lots of new choices to make. One of them is whether the child should be baptised or not, which still is a normal question for parents in Norway. Now, a couple of weeks before the baptism, they have been invited to the obligatory baptism conversation, which is one of the core tasks for a pastor in the *CofN*: carrying out preparatory conversations before baptism, weddings and funerals.

> *As the little newly made family enters the church, I leave my office to welcome them and to embark on a challenging, hour long journey: to lead a conversation that should be simultaneously informative about the baptism service, an informal way of getting to know each other, a means of creating enthusiasm about the children's activities the church can offer and, in confidence, an attempt to help the parents find words and understanding for their own relations with the church, baptism and perhaps The triune God.*

2. Outline

This essay will draw on autoethnographically methods, as described by Heather Walton in her book, *Writing methods on theological reflection*: 'Using personal experience to investigate a particular issue or concern that has a wider cultural or religious significance'[1]. I will use the experience of my many conversations with parents coming to church for baptism. The perspective 'through the eyes of a village priest' means that the content of this essay will be largely subjective and must be regarded only as simple remarks based on what it is sometimes like to be a pastor in a rural district. My parish is not the kind that would be presented in a campaign promoting successful congregations, simply because it is too small and not noteworthy enough. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this kind of unofficial voice also has an important role to play in shaping the future of the Church, with regard to mission and inclusiveness. Because pastors in rural parishes have a unique opportunity to connect and build solid relations with people, for whom we are to be priests, and because it is in parishes like this that everyday mission and the building of inclusive communities takes place.

The short italicised sections of the text are intended to represent small insights into a typical baptism conversation. The examples are all invented, on the grounds of pastoral confidentiality, but draw on general experience and quantitative research into baptism within the CofN.[2] I will firstly present the context of pastoring in a folk church with three challenges concerning different aspects of inclusion. I will then discuss how the hermeneutics of love can be part of a way forward, before I conclude with my recommendations to my church, the CofN, and the UEM.

3. Pastoring in a Nordic folk church: The context[3] and some key challenges

The new family is comfortably seated on an old church sofa. They have been offered coffee, we have introduced ourselves and I start off by asking how it has

1 Heather Walton, Writing methods in theological reflection, London: Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd 2014, p. xxxi–xxxii.

2 Olav Hagen, Noen bar de små barna til vår frelser, skåre og rossabø sine kirker. – andre gjorde det ikke: En spørreundersøkelse blant foreldre som ble invitert til dåp eller meldte barnet til dåp i haugesund i 2005, Master Thesis 2011.

3 This part draws on the comprehensive overview of the Nordic church context by Jonas Ideström / Tone Stangeland Kaufman / Christian Scharen, What really matters: Scandinavian perspectives on ecclesiology and ethnography, Eugene/OR: Pickwick Publications 2018, p. 5–14.

been for them to suddenly become a family of three. I then gently try asking them how they decided to baptise their child, whereupon the couple exchange looks and the mother answers first: 'Mainly because it is an important tradition for us. We, ourselves, are not very strong believers, but we have both been baptised and confirmed. This is our church, even though we are not here very often. So, we wanted to choose this for our child, and then, when the time comes, she can decide what to believe in.'She turns her head to her spouse who, reluctantly continues: 'Yes, it is tradition. We had no big argument about it, it was just a natural thing to do – and my grandmother had started asking, "When's the baptism?" So we just went onto your website and found a Sunday that matched our plans, suitable for our families to come together.'

Tradition is a key word. The CofN uses a cross and two axes in its logo[4], which evokes the Saga of Saint Olaf, the legendary Norwegian King and national saint, who died at the battle of Stiklestad in the year 1030.[5] Somehow, although the whole battle and its implications have been disputed by some historians,[6] this year turned the wind in favour of the White Christ, *Kvitekrist*, as Christianity was called by the Norse believing tribes scattered throughout Norway. And although the worship of the old Norse gods such as Thor and Odin continued to be practised side-by-side with the new faith, it was Christianity that 'won', shaping the Nordic countries for 1,000 years or so. The Christianisation of Norway is often criticised, because it was, in part, forcibly implemented by the Kings and tribal leaders. However, there is an important nuance in the stories about the long-term influence of missionaries from both the west and south.[7]

The priests in the CofN

Church, family tribe and land were closely connected and the fact that we still see evidence of this today in the parochial organisation of the church is central.[8] Every piece of land is covered by a parish and has a church-building with a serving priest.[9] The influence of the priests was strengthened during and after

4 Olavsmerket – Den norske kirkes våpen, http://kirken.no/nb-NO/omkirken/formedarbeidere/design/olavsmerket/.

5 Sturluson Snorri / Lee M. Hollander, Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway, Austin: University of Texas Press 1992.

6 Kongesagaer – bruk av problematiske kilder - Norgeshistorie, https://www.norgeshistorie.no/vikingtid/0823-Kongesagaer%E2%80%93bruk-av-problematiske-kilder.html.

7 Fridtjov Birkeli / Kjell O. Hauge, Tolv vintrer hadde kristendommen vært i norge, Oslo: Verbum 1995.

8 Ideström/Kaufman/Scharen, What really matters, p. 17.

9 Kirkeordning for Den norske kirke – Lovdata, https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2019-03-30-2307.

the Reformation, especially during the 18th century, when confirmation was required by law (one could not trade, get a job or marry without being confirmed). The priests became the Kings' government officials. Their mission was not only to preach the Gospel, but to proclaim and enforce the King's laws and regulations. Hence, the priest in Norway was not viewed as a simple or poor man of the people, but as a rich, powerful and, sometimes, a strict and feared individual. Many Norwegian folk tales uses priests as characters to be ridiculed by the often poor, but smarter, hero.[10] I emphasise this point to show that the *traditional leadership* referred to by some[11] to explain the priest's authority, today, comes with a certain ambiguity.

Folk church

Because of its unity with the government in Norway, the CofN was called the state Church, *statskirken* in everyday language. Today, although the official bonds between Church and state have been loosened – the Church 'is master in its own house' – close ties between the two remain; for example, the salary for priests comes from the state. The constitution, ensuring the free practise of religion for all, also states that the CofN remains the official Church, as a *people's* or *folk church*.[12] This has resulted in a strange form of belief, described by sociologist Grace Davie as a belief in the belonging.[13] Members of the folk church have strong ties to 'their church' – the village church, sometimes the only building that everybody connects to, therefore, making it a centre for villagers. This is where they baptise their children, are confirmed, get married, bury their loved ones, celebrate National Day on the 17th May and celebrate Christmas Eve (the day we traditionally celebrate Christmas in Norway). The church thereby becomes a place for the great moments throughout the year and the great transitions in life. But not necessarily for a regular spiritual life. This influences the pastoral identity, which must adapt the folk church tradition. This sometimes makes me feel more like a holy toastmaster than a spiritual pastor. Finding a balance is crucial ...

10 See e.g: The Priest and the Reader, in: Peter Christian Asbjørnsen / Harald Nordberg / Jørgen Moe, Norwegian fairy tales, Oslo: Aschehoug 2006.

11 See e.g: Sirris Stephen, Generalistledelse fremfor fagledelse i den norske kirke?, in: Teologisk tidsskrift 1 (2018), or Harald Askeland, Institutional leadership: Maintaining and developing the 'good' organisation, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan 2020.

12 § 16 in The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway – Lovdata, https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/1814-05-17.

13 Ideström/Kaufman/Scharen, What really matters, p. 10.

4. Three challenges of being a national folk church

There are, off course, several challenges of being the national folk church. Echoing the parents in our ongoing conversation, I want to emphasise three of these challenges, against the background of my own experience as a pastor:

Ecumenical

> *'Have you considered the meaning of baptism for yourself and your child – was there anything in your own childhood connected with Christian values; evening prayers or Sunday school?' I ask, trying to make a connection between the Church's teaching and expectations of infant baptism, and discover a resonance of Christian upbringing in the parents' lives.*
>
> *'When I was a child at school, we were all baptised, except for one poor boy, who was a member of another church, and was bullied for that, especially around the time we all went to church for confirmation, and he went to his church in a very small group. So, as I said, we want to choose this for our girl, and she can decide for herself later,' the mother answers. 'Yeah, me and my brother were sent to Sunday school every week when we were little – I guess mum and dad wanted us out of the house Sunday mornings' says the father, laughing.*

The CofN is a so-called majority church, which is quite a privileged position. With full-time employed pastors and other staff, church buildings in every parish (often the only ceremonial buildings for miles around) and a long tradition of membership among the population, it is a legacy to respect and not take for granted. Ecumenically, it is sometimes challenging, but still very important, to include other denominations, even other religions. In my own working experience, I have good relations with one of the largest Baptist churches in Norway and have learned a great deal through this.

In 2017, the year of the Reformation jubilee, we invited guest speakers from other denominations for a small discussion and to deliver the sermon of the day. This included the local Baptist pastor. He told us a different story about the Reformation: the persecution of their spiritual forefathers, the Anabaptists, who had to flee Europe, because they were persecuted as heretics by both the Roman Catholic and Lutheran movements. Being a Baptist in Norway has not been easy. Not that many years ago, refusing to be confirmed, for example, was a radical and unpopular choice. The pastor told us that he, himself, had been baptised as a child because his mother had found it so hard being the only one in school, who was a Baptist. 'It is challenging to be a church in Norway, when

we have this large majority church calling itself "*The* Church of *Norway*"", the pastor told us.

Ecumenical work is one of the core tasks of Bishops and the Council of Ecumenical and International Relations[14]. The story from 2017 tells us that it should also be a local and pastoral responsibility to build bridges between different Christian communities in local society. Where this succeeds, it can be a powerful sign of unity despite the differences (John 17). In my parish, we traditionally celebrate Pentecost together with the many free churches, among them the Baptist church, sharing responsibilities: for example, me preaching, the Baptists leading the service and another free church doing the worship. During Covid-19, we even managed to have a joint drive-in service to celebrate Pentecost. The congregations have a long tradition for these arrangements, but it would not be possible without regular meetings between the pastors and priests from the different congregations.

Mission and Christian values

> '*…yes, and my grandmother used to pray and sing lullabies about Jesus for us when I was little. I still remember them, often singing them, myself, to our baby girl now. It is sometimes the only thing that gets her to sleep!' the mother says. I smile at her, thinking: How can you, at the same time, say your faith is not strong and still sing these old Christian lullabies to your baby girl?*

It both can and should be possible to criticise the practice of baptism in the CofN: we do, as a friend once stated, 'administer the sacraments before the word'. By that, he meant that it is wrong, for example, to baptise without a firmer belief in the Christian faith. It is in the nature of the folk church tradition that anyone coming for baptism shall be baptised. Infant baptism is based on the parents' willingness to teach their child in the faith. As you see from our conversation, there might not be much to go on. Thus, making disciples (Matt 28:19–20) can sometimes be a difficult task. Often, we do not see the family again until they are invited to receive children's Bibles when their child reaches the age of four.[15] However, there is a certain, perhaps a pietistic element – or some parts of the law of Jante[16] – in many parents' view of their own faith. Frequently, my job is

14 At official church level, conversations between the Norwegian Baptist Union and the CofN produced the document: https://kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/church-of-norway/dokumenter/baptist_lutheran_1989.pdf.

15 Inviting all 4-year-olds to come to church to receive a children's bible or another spiritual book has been practised for more than 30 years in the CofN.

16 https://workingwithnorwegians.com/the-law-of-jante-janteloven/.

to confirm and assure that the faith, one has, is not small or lacking at all; it is there, but, far too often, it has been laid to rest and not reflected upon for a while.

Integrating all nations?

> *In response to the question of their own faith, the father leans forward: 'Of course, Christian values are important for us, to be good to one another and all that. As I said, when I was a little boy my parents sent me to Sunday school every week: it didn't do us any harm… And now there are so many different religions and opinions, so we wanted to baptise her to give her this set of good values to grow up in', he states.*

Now, this last part is the most difficult to address, since it is rarely openly articulated, usually only implicitly expressed. But, I have also come across this explicitly: the bonds between baptism in the national folk church and strong scepticism of other nations and religions. In our family conversation, the father stresses *Christian values,* because of his scepticism of other religions. In encountering other religions, I believe it is always good to be familiar with the basis of your own faith. However, we do have a real challenge within the CofN to include people, who are not part of the Norwegian population in our congregations. I sometimes wonder if this long tradition of baptism, church and family gathering, the wearing of the national traditional clothes, *bunad,* makes the whole ceremony look like a painting from the national romantic era of 150 years ago, and can actually hinder inclusion. The CofN carries out a considerable amount of good diaconal work, for example with people of other faiths, immigrants and disabled people. However, Sunday worship tends to be a more 'polished' space. Some would say I overemphasise this point. In recent years, though, right-wing nationalists have started using the Saint Olaf Day celebrations on the 29th of July – *Olsok*, as a day to march and protest. By allowing the Viking age and Norse sagas to flow into their opinions, we risk mixing the national folk church with nationalism. And if there is even a slight risk of this, it must be addressed and confronted!

5. Being tuned in to the hermeneutics of love – a possibility for pastoral conversations?

As I wrote in the introduction, preparatory pastoral conversations before baptism, weddings and funerals have considerable, untapped potential. We are permitted intimate access to people's lives, through our traditional role as someone they can trust and confide in. The conversations we have are often very deep and personal. For some people, these conversations are the only ones like this, they will ever have.[17] Having the priest among them gives couples and families an opportunity to reflect on their beliefs and values. For the priest, this is an enormous responsibility, described by the Danish theologian Knut Løgstrup in his ethical demand:

> *"An individual never has something to do with another human being, without holding something of that person's life in their hands. It can be a very small matter, a passing mood, a dampening or quickening of the spirit, a disgust one deepens or takes away. But it may also be of tremendous significance so that it is simply up to the individual whether the other person's life flourishes or not."*[18]

Trust is the basis of Løgstrup's demand. In his *Methafysics*[19], he further elaborates and develops his ethics of sensing, *sanseetikken*, which I can best translate as being tuned in to something, for example, observing a piece of art. In my view, this is the best way to describe the conversations between the priest and, for example, the parents we have followed so far in this essay. The core task for priests is getting to know their congregation. What are their values, concerns, faith and doubts? This is a spiritual task, involving prayer before, during and after the conversation; trying to be connected with, and tuned into, the people we meet, being present. In this artistic way of viewing the conversation – even if we suddenly talk about the decoration of houses, literature, farming and so on – we are connected. The challenging and intriguing part of this, is to draw lines or build bridges from this to the Church, to faith. My primary task as a pastor over the last seven years has been that: trying to connect people's everyday lives to the Church, so that it is not just a place for rare occasions, but a place they belong to and has relevance for tomorrow. Each conversation is different, just as each situation, couple and family is different. It was only recently,

17 Stig Öberg, Själavård, Stockholm: Verbum 1999.
18 K. E. Løgstrup, Bjørn Rabjerg / Robert Stern, The ethical demand, Selected works of K.E. Logstrup, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020, p. 15.
19 K. E. Løgstrup, Kunst og erkendelse, 3. udgave. ed., Metafysik, Århus: Klim 2018.

that I found common ground for my conversations as a priest: the hermeneutics of love.

In an essay on biblical authority, Patrick Nullens presents the *Hermeneutics of love* as a way of interpreting Scripture for modern man.[20] 'Love is a lens, through which we see true values'[21], he writes in the summary. Then, he shows how love – not as the soft, post-modern value, but the true love from Jesus as obedient saviour – can become a lens, through which we interpret scripture. I think his concept of the *Hermeneutics of love* should also be a basis for all priests and pastors in their encounters with others. It is just so hard to remember this, so easy to forget. One way of practising this, is to do as my mentor taught me during the short intern period at the end of pastoral training before ordination: 'Always try to learn something from people, instead of pressing them to learn from you'. I had been complaining about all my baptism conversations leading nowhere and was losing confidence in my abilities to bear this responsibility. When I let go of my eagerness to learn and teach (there will always be plenty of time for this later, for example in sermons), I started to listen and be curious. The conversation becomes a possible hermeneutical task, because we are trying to reach an understanding of baptism together, just as Gadamer said: 'To understand it does not mean primarily to reason one's way back into the past, but to have a present involvement in what is said.'[22] Letting Gadamer and Nullens speak together, reaching understanding in the conversations I have described above is possible as a priest, without losing the mission and the message on the way. Hermeneutics is always about finding common understanding. The hermeneutics of love is always about God, who is love (John 3:16 and 1 John 4). This is where we can address ecumenical challenges, loving each other as Christian brothers and sisters. This is where we must not judge, but confirm and cheer on the traces of faith in ordinary people's lives. This is where we must highlight and challenge the nationalistic tendency in the usage of Christian values – and teach and provide guidance on what these values truly are: mercy, forgiveness, love and sacrifice for our neighbour.

20 Patrick Nullens, Theologia caritatis and the moral authority of scripture: Approaching 2 Timothy 3:16–17 with a hermeneutic of love, in: European Journal of Theology 22/1 (2013), p. 38–49.

21 Nullens, Theologia, p. 38.

22 Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and method / Wahrheit und Methode, 2nd, rev. ed. translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer / Donald G. Marshall, London: Continuum 2004, p. 393.

6. Conclusion: the future of the National Church – a pastoral responsibility?

I named my essay 'A National Church for all the nation or all nations?', pointing towards the threefold issue of inclusion in a traditionally laden national folk church: ecumenism, mission and integration. As I have shown in the theological reflection, this is a hermeneutical challenge and task for the priests in the Church. It is also a task that cannot be accomplished unless we apply the hermeneutics of love – being tuned into the possibilities of pastoral conversations. It is my challenge and advice to both the CofN and the UEM to develop and encourage its pastors in this very important but often hidden everyday task: their pastoral conversations, for example, the meeting between a village priest and a new family, coming to church for baptism.

As I show the parents and their baby girl out, an hour later, we have laughed, argued, talked about practical matters and gotten to know each other a bit. I feel grateful for the task that has been given to me – being a village priest for these people. 'May the Lord bless them and keep them from all harm', I pray as they leave the church.

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SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS INCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR AFRICA

Amos Kameli

1. Introduction

Global challenges have led to the migration of people from, and to, different areas throughout the world. Communities that were once fairly homogeneous are experiencing an increase in the number of newcomers from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[1] This has created differences and inequalities, with some groups regarded as being superior, while others are ignored, disrespected, violated and even renamed as outcast communities. The Church has also experienced this inflow as a challenge, and been hesitant as to whether it should welcome them into its mission of bringing people to the Lord with the aim of building a better society with appropriate religious standards, respect for one another and human dignity.[2] The aim of this essay is to provide a descriptive analysis of, and theological reflection on, the challenges facing the Church in building an inclusive community that is committed to combating discrimination, exclusion and violence. The essay will also describe the steps required to alleviate the challenges identified and strategies needed to build an inclusive community for the churches to provide good spiritual and social care and services.

2. Challenges facing the Church in building an inclusive community

There are many challenges facing the Church, today, in connection with community inclusion. These include: *the history of humanity (too ethnic-based instead of*

1 Kien Lee, Building Inclusive Community, Community Tool Box from the Center for Community Health and Development University of Kansas (N.D), https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/inclusive-communities/main.

2 Kevin Fleming, The Challenges of being the Church: 4. Being an Inclusive Church, Sermon Evansville Indiana 2017. https://firstpresevansville.com/mediafiles/uploaded/b/0e6409206_1500916912_being-an-inclusive-church-r.pdf.

being inclusive), religious intolerance, conservative ideology, disrespect and intolerance of diversity, irresponsibility and carelessness towards diverse groups around the church etc. This paper, however, concentrates specifically on two of the above challenges facing the Church as it struggles to eliminate discriminations, exclusion and violence through building an inclusive community.

Starting with *the history of humanity:* it is true to state that, human beings, animals and other living organisms are created naturally and historically to live in groups sharing the same or similar characteristics with the strategy of co-operating for their survival.[3] The history of our church reveals that a large number of congregants come from the same ethnic background and tribe, from the same area and, perhaps, speak the same language. They may have had the Bible, liturgy and hymns translated into their own languages. But, instead of promoting inclusivity, this practice promotes the individuality of communities.

For thousands of years, humans have competed against each other[4]. Ethnic, tribal and racial identities are a challenge to the Christian Churches, in particular, and have been difficult to overcome[5]. The majority of congregants in our church belong to one tribe (in our area), which is regarded as one of the best known and literate tribes in our country. Many of its citizens enjoy a good life and they have always used their 'superiority' as a successful tool against the minority, even in church contexts. In his article, Cory J. Clark wrote that, "humans evolved in the context of intense intergroup competition and groups, comprised of loyal members, more often succeeded than groups comprised of non-loyal members."[6] The issue of tribalism and selfishness are prevalent in all corners of the world[7]. In actual fact, the Bible also depicted this situation: God dealt directly with Israelites instead of other tribes.

Churches around the globe have tried out to find the solution to this challenge. It has, however, been largely unsuccessful. This was attested to by Billy Graham and Lee when they stated that,

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3 David Ison, Including the Exclusive; How Liberal can you be? Lecture at St Paul's Cathedral, Inclusive Church Office 2017, https://www.inclusive-church.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Including-the-Exclusive-Inclusive-Church-Lecture-2017.pdf, p. 3.

4 John Tooby et al., Grouped in mind: The coalitional roots of war and morality, in: Henrik Høgh-Olesen (ed.), Human Morality and Sociality: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan 2010, p. 91–234.

5 Eric D. Barreto, Negotiating difference: Theology and ethnicity in the Acts of the Apostles, in: Word and World 31/2 (2011), p. 129–137.

6 Cory J. Clark et al., Tribalism is a Human nature, in: Current Direction in Psychological Science 28/6 (2019), p. 587.

7 Jonathan Siaga, Tribalism in the Bible, https://jonathansiaga.wordpress.com/2012/05/07/tribalism-in-the-bible/ [Accessed 14th February 2021].

> "In spite of the fact that racial and ethnic resentment is the number one social problem facing both the world and the Church, tragically, too often in the past, evangelical Christians have turned a blind eye to racism or have been willing to stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation, saying it was not our responsibility' and that, 'Adventists remain as racially separated as the rest of Christianity and the rest of society. [...] our church is still riddled with racism and segregation."[8]

Some churches have opted to be multicultural and multiracial in the effort to achieve inclusivity. Our church, on the other hand, is too rigid to change and continues to insist on the practice of separate worship based on cultural background.

The history of Rwanda[9] and Nigeria[10] (as well as that of the Bible, too[11]) shows that, one of the factors contributing to the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the Nigerian ethnic crisis in 2018 was a consequence of church members (leaders) exhibiting ethnic and tribal bias by taking sides with their tribes instead of following biblical principles.

How does human history (ethnicity, tribalism and racism) affect the Church? This may be one of the questions to reflect on before we opt for specific solutions. Being inflexible towards one's own church history can easily destroy the early work of evangelism, creating discord among members of the same congregation, community and society. This may result in some members forming new groups to set up small churches. Boubakar Sanou[12] points out that the Church cannot take pride in doctrine and theological purity if, at the same time, ethnic discrimination, tribalism and racism are allowed to exist in church mission and if no attempt is made to rectify the absence of inclusive community.

The best way to motivate church leaders, congregants and the community to be inclusive is to critically remind them of the aspect of 'neighbourhood' as proclaimed in Luke 10:25–37 to, '... love your neighbour as yourself'. It is clear

8 Boubakar Sanou, Ethnicity, Tribalism, and Racism: A Global Challenge for the Christian Church and its Mission, in: The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership 9/1 (2015), p. 96.

9 The Religious Affiliation of Rev. Elizaphan Ntakirutimana and his son: the New York Times reported in 2003 that the United Nations Tribunal dealing with the Rwandan killing frenzy of 1994 convicted Rev. Elizaphan Ntakirutimana of genocide and sentenced him to ten years in prison for aiding and abetting the genocide.

10 Africa/Nigeria-Overcoming the sin of Tribalism: A challenge for the Church in Africa, in: Agencia Fides 2018, http://www.fides.org/en/news/63777-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Overcoming_the_sin_of_tribalism_a_challenge_for_the_Church_of_Africa.

11 Luke 10:30 stating that, '…. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side…'.

12 Sanou, Ethnicity, p. 100.

that people cannot claim to love the Lord with all their hearts, soul and strength, while simultaneously failing to love their neighbours (fellow human beings). It is vital to relinquish the hypocrisy between us the 'people of God' by stopping the pretence that we love God while simultaneously failing to love one another.

Nevertheless, the question may be, who is your neighbour or what is neighbourhood? The answer is found in the same verses, which explain that it is anyone using his or her time, energy, wealth, mercy etc. to help or care for the needy. In law[13], a neighbour includes anyone, who is so close that he or she is positively or negatively affected by an act of the other; that, the issue of distance between the two does not matter, here. Instead, an actor should reasonably think of the neighbour when doing or failing to do something, where the 'duty of care' arises; thus, *caring* is one of the most important elements in neighbourhood. *Thus, loving and caring is including someone to be part of this 'many in oneness'.*

The second best way is to accept that these historical traits are part of the identity of each individual. When we become Christian, our cultural identities are not destroyed but, as McGarry[14] opines, we are called to live 'above' them; we are called through the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome any divisions facing us. We are, therefore, called to experience the differences and to embody and practice the much deeper unity, we have been given in baptism.

Remarkably, human beings are tribal creatures; they were not designed to reason dispassionately about the world, but designed to reason in ways that promote the interest of their coalition and, hence, themselves. Because religious missiology always involves the crossing of ethnic and cultural boundaries to spread the word of God, it is, therefore, important that this challenge is addressed and put into the legal and biblical perspective of loving and caring for one another. The Church should revisit and re-evaluate itself on the basis of John 13:34-35, in which Jesus Christ gave us a new command, to love one another: as He loved us, so we must love one another. In His statement in Mathew 12:46-50, Jesus broke down the walls of division, the walls of tribalism, racism and ethnic discrimination, and embraced all His disciples as His sisters and brothers in Christ. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; all of you are one in Christ Jesus".[15]

13 Adrian Chan, Who then – in Law – is my Neighbor? Lord Atkin's 'Neighbor Principle' as an Aid for the Principled delineation of the Boundaries of Negligent Liability, Master Thesis Toronto University 2011, p. 9.

14 Cecil McGarry, A Community of Disciples to witness to the Kingdom, in: Cecil McGarry / Patrick Ryan (ed.), Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and practical perspectives, Kenya: Pauline Publication Africa 2001, p. 192–226.

15 Galatians 3:28.

The second challenge confronting the Church is the *multi-theological conflicting ideas* that lead to *multi-religious intolerance*. In Tanzania, Christianity was introduced between the 1880s and 1900s by various missionaries from Germany (Leipzig, Bethel and Berlin mission societies)[16]. The Islamic religion was established in the coastal and islands areas in the 19th Century[17] and other religions followed in between. Throughout the world, alongside Atheism and Agnosticism, there are countless Muslims mosques as well Baha'i, Buddhist Confucian, Druze, Gnostic and Hindu buildings and Christian church groups that appear to have mushroomed overnight, each with a unique religious standpoint or theological message and, of course, a new church name.

These challenges are discussed within the scope of Christianity. In Tanzania, the older, established Churches (Roman Catholic, Lutherans, Anglicans to name but a few) have been pressurised to ascertain whether these new church groups and other religious affiliations are of the required quality. The answer to this question hinges on the theological (biblical) education of their leaders, the ecclesiology and ethics of their members, the mission of their original visions, on which they stand. The uncertainty of the answers has led to a misunderstanding of the churches' theological views and, consequently, has also led to the escalation of conflicting theological views between churches.[18]

Some old churches question the worship style of the new churches, which may include loud preaching, singing, long, protracted overnight prayers, the use of so-called holy oil and water, handkerchiefs, unusual clothes, revealing style of Satan, preaching about disease and misfortune, applying 'magical concoctions' to congregants' bodies as a way of receiving God's healing. From the other perspective, the new churches talk disparagingly about the old churches saying they are not *born-again* Christians, do not possess God's miraculous power and cannot heal or give hope to their congregants. From both sides, there is no sign of tolerance towards one another; disparaging words are among the divisive tools used to extend exclusion, thereby causing conflict and violence among Christians in society.

The concept of 'tolerance' is the appreciation of diversity and includes the ability to live and let others live, the ability to exercise fair and objective attitudes

16 Falres I. Iloma, Lutheran-Roman Dialogue: Reflection on the situation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), Lecture University of Iringa, https://heritagestudies.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/1.2-FIlomo_lecture_final_clean_13.10.pdf, p. 1.

17 Robert Leurs et al., Religions and Development, Research Program: Mapping the Development Activities of Faith-based Organization in Tanzania, Working Paper 58, Birmingham 2011, p. 2.

18 Religious Conflicts on the rise in Africa, https://www.dw.com/en/religious-conflicts-on-the-rise-in-africa/a-40645771 [Accessed on 12th February 2021].

towards those, whose opinions, beliefs, rights, practices and religions differ from one's own.[19] Furthermore, tolerance is an integral component of different groups interacting in a respectful, understanding way, for example, where individuals or communities have been deeply entrenched in violent conflict, helping the affected groups endure the pain of the past and resolve their differences.[20]

Kelvin Fleming[21] poses a question about how we are going to include the poor in the life of our congregation? The author of this paper poses another: how is the 'Church', together with its congregants, going to accept other differences within the Church? Because the impression is that for you to be even considered for inclusion, you need to be rich; you have to be well-educated to be heard, you should not be disabled and so on. Fleming further asks if we meet those in need eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart and include them in our community faith?

What negative effects could these challenges have in the Church and in social communities? This might be one of the questions to reflect on before we decide on specific solutions. When one church group is not on friendly terms with another, there is a distinct possibility that this will create hatred between church members, even if these members are blood related; due to theological and ideological differences, these members will each think that he or she and not the other is in the 'best church' and, hence, worship the 'right God'. Church intolerance brings about divisions between church groups; this division spills over onto other citizens, resulting in religious conflict and violence in society.

The result is that, as time passes, differences groups no longer perceive the Church as the important, key institution it once was[22], because the ideologies of these churches consider that anyone who does not look likes them is not 'right' and, therefore, has no authority to be with them. The Church no longer enjoys the respect it once had, because people feel they are being discriminated against and excluded. But the Church still has alternative ways of promoting the inclusivity of these churches; one of the best ways is to highlight the fact that each of them is Christian; the leaders of these Christian groups need to focus on the point of being 'one Christian family' rather than being 'disparate Christians'.[23]

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19 Hanna Onyi Yusuf, Promoting peaceful Co-existence and Religious Tolerance through Supplementary Readers and Reading Comprehension Passage in Basic Education Curriculum, in: International Journal of Humanities and Social Science 3/8 (2013), p. 224–232.

20 Maitumeleng Albertina Ntho-Ntho et al., Religious Intolerance: The case of Principals in Multi-Faith Schools, in: Journal for the Study of Religion 29/1 (2016), p. 167–186.

21 Ibid.

22 Fleming, Challenges.

23 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Furthermore, the dividing labels and distinctions used by 'the world' are no longer in effect within the Church because Christ has broken down these humanly erected walls of divisions. The Church is for everyone because God is for everyone; for us to be 'Church', we need to confront our fears, narrow-mindedness, prejudices and biases. Patricia Bay points out that an inclusive church, which has learned to live together with great variety and diversity, is well placed to be an instrument of the Gospel in today's world of rapid change, economic dislocation and great diversity.[24]

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Historically[25], Clarksburg begun its journey towards becoming an inclusive community with good reasons for believing that building an inclusive community is important; in contrast, if we have a scattered community in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, literacy, disability etc., it would be difficult to realise and appreciate its new diversity, so that such acts as hate, discrimination and violence resulting in conflict and war do not occur.

Some literary reviews comment on the proper time to work on building an inclusive community. However, Kien Lee[26] suggests that although an inclusive community can be built at any time, it is, nevertheless, most obvious in the aftermath of a decision or incident that caused harm to a particular group of people. For instance, in the event of religious or ethnic violence. When building an inclusive community, it is important to give due consideration to the motivations of each group such as the type and sequence of strategies selected for application (if required) in response a crisis or conflict, the resources available, the level of external support, the rate of progress and the expected outcome.

With regard to building an inclusive community, Taryn Higashi (et al.)[27] and Abbi Smith[28] have propounded the idea of looking into the history of each specific group to be included.

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24 Patricia Bays, Anglican Diversity; Challenge for the 21st Century, Toronto: ABC Publishing 2001.

25 Maggie Potapchuk, Steps towards an Inclusive Community: The story of Clarksburg, West Virginia, Washington DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2001.

26 Lee, Building Inclusive Community.

27 David Chavis et al., Principles for Intergroup Relations Project: A first Look. Gaithersburg, MD: Association for the Study and Development of Communities (ASDC) 1999.

28 Abbi Smith, Four ways to Create an Inclusive Community, Education matters - Sanford School's Private school blog (2019), http://blogs.sanfordschool.org/4-ways-to-create-an-inclusive-community.

- Create and welcome opportunities for members of different groups to identify and share their similarities and differences. This allows some member groups to recognise that, although they differ in some ways, in other respects they share a common identity and perceptions of others. It is then helpful to find a phrase, which all groups will have in common; one that appeals to all groups. This may be enhanced by creating a day to celebrate community oneness.
- Identify social events (political, social, religious and economic) that have an impact on the surrounding community, e.g. elections. Engage the most influential leaders of the major groups within the church from the outset to provide guidance – particularly where inclusion between communities concerns more than one racial, ethnic and cultural group – on the authenticity of all information gathered, cultural resources and needs; this ensures the equality of all group leaders in terms of power, respect and importance.
- Identify and respect conflicts and transform them into improved capacity and relations within the community. Some conflicts may have led to the disintegration of these communal groups, but, in spite of this, recognise these conflicts and acknowledge that they have their own way of solving them. Some may emerge as a consequence of misinformation or negatively stereotyping one another; some do not appreciate the others' cultural values, or compete for the available resources. Some cultures encourage groups to 'conform' while others encourage the opposite groups to take revenge or challenge the force impinging on their rights. The solution is, therefore, to use conflict in a constructive way as a means of developing citizens' capacity to work in unity. This may be done by welcoming an outside facilitator to work with the church and the surrounding community groups.
- Allow for the identification of each group's assets to be shared or exchanged with another group as a demonstration of oneness; assets in this context refer to the values, traditions, historical events, art forms, language etc. Use considered language, learn about and eliminate the use of micro-aggression. Identify and acknowledge potentially unconscious bias, ask questions, make no assumptions and listen to their queries.[29]
- Recognise the need to acknowledge, support and celebrate successful collective actions; encourage acknowledgement of each step of any stage or strategy successfully achieved and increase support by celebrating the results of church and community group efforts to build inclusive community. This fosters relations between groups, reinforces the positive experience and outcome of working together and encourages groups to want to work together again.

29 Ibid.

– Being an accessible community frees them from the barriers and limitations of anyone's participation in everyday life; it reduces social isolation, increases economic gains, helps people when diversity and differences are acknowledged as strengths; in other words, they may be 'different together' to 'form one will'.[30]

There is a "dual imperative" to work towards social and religious inclusion: one of these is a moral imperative to advance human dignity[31], the spiritual moral imperative to revamp spiritual guidance. In writing to the Church in Rome, the Apostle Paul said: May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. [32#]

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30 Rick Hansen Foundation USA, The Upside of accessible and inclusive communities, (2017) https://www.rickhansen.com/news-stories/blog/upside-accessible-and-inclusive-communities.

31 Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac. "Strengthening Social Infrastructure: Meeting the Challenge of Social Inclusion", presentation to the conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Ottawa, August 14, 2006.

32 Romans 15:5–7 (New Revised Standard Version - NRSV).

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BEING CHURCH IN CONGO

Christian Kambale Kasomo

1. Introduction

In our fallen world, there are many human-caused disasters. These maladies are called: discrimination, exclusion, violence, etc. Discrimination is injustice, or unworthy treatment of a category of people according to sex, history, age, environment, tribe, culture, race, belief, or disability. Exclusion is an act of excluding, neglecting, disregarding the voice and blocking a person or depriving him/her of his/her rights, dignity and peace. Violence is when a force acts on someone to hurt, damage, destroy, abuse or threaten him/her. DRC has suffered from all of these since its inception and still continues to bleed and lament on the loss of millions of beloved ones and valuable properties due to these tragedies. Our dual purpose in writing this article is to raise awareness on the three main issues that make DRC a hard country to live in and to do justice to the Church by highlighting the solutions that it implements.

2. Corruption

Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain[1]. This abuse is pervasive in DRC and in all the sectors of life; it happens in many forms in the shadow. The government comes up with a thousand fake promises to the citizens and massive electoral fraud. Many contracts are signed by officials receiving commissions on signing contracts that bind the republic. Cases of embezzlement of public, church and organizations funds are familiar. Obviously, most people's ambition for public charges are in order to get wealth and personal welfare not necessarily as a way of serving the nation.

Therefore, politicians attribute themselves big salaries and privileges (the MP earns US $ 22.000 monthly) whereas the ordinary State workers have almost nothing (a school teacher who trains the MP is paid US $ 80 a month; many of them would work for years before being paid that meager stipend). Corruption

1 https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption.

impedes access to services of health, education, public administration, justice ... The wealthiest country of the world in terms of minerals, DRC, is unable to feed its citizens, to build infrastructures and to offer a decent life and a destiny of hope to its 100 million souls while billions are being paid to political godfathers. Besides a minority of wealthy the big majority languishes in misery and instability. Unfortunately the Church is accused of being a political smokescreen to the bad governance of weak political leaders as it does its best to stay the greatest social force that cares for the vulnerable ones and runs schools, health centers, social services and development projects and thus, avoid corrupted systems to collapse.

What makes DRC, a nation where 95% of people score 19 over 100 and rank 169 over 180 on the Transparency International corruption perception index one of the 11 most corrupt nations in the world? The response is: corruption. However, in DRC there is a firm will on the part of the Church to work for the emergence of justice and participative democracy. One of the recent initiatives of this kind is the *Forum des Laïcs pour l'Émergence de la RDC*[2]. In 2009, the CBCA launched the fast-growing new approach of school chaplaincy that focuses on value education for moral uplift of the nation. Sometimes, the Church denounces bad governance as well. However, there still is much to desire. The Church should point the citizen in the right direction and help them elect competent men and women of integrity. Because this race is rare, the Church should nurture them in vocation-nurturing groups.

3. Chronic wars

DRC has been at war since 1993. It is already known that the war lords fight for minerals and land. Deadlier than World War II, the unending wars have snatched at least 12 million innocent beloved ones whom we continue to lament. The peaceful population has sustained important losses of properties. Over 170 villages have been deserted. Over 3 million IDPs (internally displaced people) have left their homes and means of subsistence and are abandoned to their sad fate. More than 1 million women and girls have been raped and left with the injuries. The number of orphans and widows has drastically increased. Poverty prostitution, the phenomenon of street children and cases of abduction are simply out of proportion. Everybody is highly traumatized. In these difficult circumstances, many kids have abandoned school and too many people are jobless. In reaction to violence, over 170 groups of village defenders have seen the day in

2 Forum of lay people for the emergence of DRC.

East DRC only. It is not understandable why the area that has had the strongest UN peace-keeping mission of the world (20.000 elements) for so long (since 1999) has not been able to bring back peace to DRC.

How to be the Church of Christ in such a pandemonium? The Church has done all its best to care for the victims. It is good to see the Church active in a large range of ministries to inspire hope, encourage people to abandon a dangerous lifestyle, reconcile people and help them have equal access to opportunities. The Church is busy with relief work, food security, microfinance, orphanages, justice and peace groups, advocacy, trauma education programs ... By being on the side of the victims of brutality, it's true that all this time the church has mostly served as a bereavement coordinator in a care hospice or the Good Samaritan to relieve pain and help the hurt not to die and survive. The Church is already weak due to the bad effects of war; however its structures are always stretched to their breaking point. In such a perspective, it has a permanent feeling of inadequacy. And yet, it needs to go one step further. Otherwise, how to be light and salt of DRC as long as the nation is not put out of the harm's way? Is to bind the strong man, to neutralize the perpetrator not part of the responsibility of working as salt and light?

4. The issues of women and children

In 2013, the DRC was named the worst place to be a mother and still ranks last due to a heap of problems that the woman and the child undergo, including highest rates of maternal and child mortality, insufficient education, poverty, and low political participation for women[3]. This position is established on concrete data. Domestic violence is a pandemic. The phenomenon of child neglect, child soldiers and children enslaved in mines and prostitution is pervasive. An enquiry made over a period of 12 months in 2006 and 2007 by the American Journal of Public Health found that 400.000 females aged 15 to 49 were raped, that is 48 women and girls every hour.[4]

Another study that was done in 2018 reports that there would be 1.152 women raped per day. The CBCA, through hospitals and counseling centers and specialized programs, offers medical and psychological assistance, and mobilizes each layer of its community to play an essential role in restoring peace and fight against sexual violence against women and speak out calling on the society and the political system to ensure the protection of women and to punish these in-

3 https://www.borgenmagazine.com/drc-named-worst-country-mothers/.
4 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13367277.

dignities. Moreover, the CBCA organizes awareness campaigns on the dignity and rights of women and teachings on Biblical truth are preached in its parishes and institutions. Both the voice and the vocation of the women are no longer neglected in the CBCA as she can now be appointed as an elder or an evangelist associate to the pastor in a congregation.

5. Ten recommendations to the CBCA

To be more effective, the CBCA should:

1. Retrain its leadership on the current realities and equip them with life skills like courage and stamina to enable them to follow the Lord even in rotten places and nurture competent and strong leaders and other men and women of courage and integrity.
2. Formulate a clear theology of human dignity, politics and War.
3. Expand the patterns of chaplaincy of politics, schools, the university, the army and other key sectors of the society.
4. Move from the culture of Evangelistic campaigns to discipleship programs that take into account all the needs of the person.
5. Multiply partnerships in the global Church so that help for the vulnerable may increase.
6. Develop a true Christian entrepreneurship so as to increase the capacity of the Church.
7. Encourage the Church ministers to be more people-oriented by focusing on the needs of people in Church.
8. Engage in interreligious collaboration to raise a dignified community of rights and tolerance, without exclusion or discrimination, and fight together against violence.
9. Increase cultural activities in its parishes. Games and sports, dance, music, meetings, drama, skills discovery and talent show constitute an asset and a transformative paradigm to celebrate our differences & strengths, break down tribalism, racism, violence, hatred, conflicts and all kinds of discrimination; build equality, unity, peace, solidarity, justice, harmony, dialogue, respect and honor. Thus, youth centers should be initiated and built in each region.
10. Elaborate, implement and model a code of good conduct in the society.

RESISTING ECOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

Engaging Indigenous Knowledge in Dialogue with Christian Traditions

Jonathan Kivatsi Kavusa

Abstract

This paper explores whether African traditional or indigenous worldviews have the potential to offer valuable insights that could enhance the Churches' ecological commitment in Africa. Through stories, taboos and proverbs, a threefold African ontology was transmitted from one generation to the next, namely the *moral or spiritual dimension of nature*, the *pre-eminence of the community over individual interest*s and *the cosmological dimension of the chieftaincy (governance)*. This concept protected people against dangers that might result from unhealthy ecosystems, promoted responsible ways of interacting with nature and defined responsibilities to ensure the sustainability of resources. With a proper interpretation, in combination with a sound Biblical *green* Theology, based on what Joseph Cardijn called '*See-Judge-Act*' analysis, this threefold African ontology can be transformed into a highly effective hermeneutical vehicle for African Churches' ecological witness. Recommendations are given to the UEM and its member Churches in Africa to refine their ecological commitment in Africa.

1. Introduction

The Martinez Cobo report defines indigenous communities as 'those, which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies… consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the society...'[1]. In contrast to the situation in America and Australia, this definition is poorly adapted in Africa, where all peoples are native and any attempt to name one group as indig-

1 Martinez Cobo, Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations (1986), E/CN.4/sub.2/1986/7/add. 4, paragraph 376.

enous, but not another, provokes confusion. In this way, the majority of Africans live in rural areas with strong attachment to their land and culture.

The World Bank estimated that about 60 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africans live in rural areas, representing 656,284,579 people[2]. Migration from urban centres to rural areas (villages) has actually increased as a result of the economic damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. From a philosophical perspective of culture, the 'village' is a living space encompassing a combined system of ideas and expressions of belief, art or moral values[3]. The village is the complete integration of the social, spiritual and ecological relations between human identity and the land.

However, many of the ongoing transformations that are shaping the future of the African continent for better or worse are being played out in rural areas, in other words, in the villages. This includes forest clearing, large-scale land acquisition and overexploitation, cultural disruption and population displacement. The manner, in which these things are being carried out, has provoked frustrations and conflicts among local populations as well as their resistance to these processes. This exploitation of the natural world, driven forward by a never-ending obsession with profit, is disrupting the ecological balance. Many rural areas in Africa have been turned into dumping grounds for foreign and local garbage. This is endangering human health, farming, food security and biodiversity[4]. Consequently, research into achieving sustainability in rural Africa should be a major priority in the coming decades in an effort to avoid escalation.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, most of these people are Christian and full members of our Churches. However, although some Churches do have JPIC desks, their contribution at grassroots level is not conclusive. Despite their immense influence in African societies, the Churches are still hindered by what Lynn White referred to as the 'Western view of reality', demonising the African indigenous knowledge, taboos, wisdom and beliefs, which had previously sustained order, harmony and bio-cultural life in Africa[5].

The result is the relegation of culture, de-sacralisation and an unrestrained exploitation of nature. Thus, since 2015, Africa is designated as having a 'biocapacity deficit': its footprint is greater than the capacity of its ecosystems to

2 World Bank World Bank: Rural Population – Sub-Saharan Africa (2020), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL?locations=ZG.

3 Saras Dewi, Asa Di Desa (2020), https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2020/08/01/asa-di-desa/.

4 Inger Andersen, Africa Must Tell the Rest of the World That We Are Not Their Dumping Ground (2020), https://mg.co.za/article/2020-02-13-africa-must-tell-the-rest-of-the-world-that-we-are-not,their-dumping-ground/.

5 Lynn White, The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, in: Science 155 (1967), p. 1206.

produce useful biological materials and absorb human waste[6]. Africa, therefore, needs to find a way to shift onto a new and sustainable growth model that will meet the needs of today without limiting the opportunities of future generations[7]. It is argued that this should be socio-ecologically oriented, to take account of the context and worldviews of African actors[8].

The question is how African churches should participate in this process. African indigenous traditions are reckoned to have the socio-ecological insights required to foster sustainability in rural areas. Through stories, taboos and proverbs, a threefold African ontology was passed on from one generation to the next, namely *the moral or spiritual dimension of nature*, *the pre-eminence of the community over individual interests* and *the cosmological dimension of the chieftaincy (governance)*. With a proper contextual biblical theology, based on what Joseph Cardijn called '*See-Judge-Act*'[9] analysis, this threefold African ontology can be transformed into a highly effective hermeneutical framework to foster the ecological witness of African Churches.

We should look, first, at existing ecological hermeneutics before attempting to articulate the need to inaugurate an African ecological hermeneutics in our Churches.

2. Existing ecological Christian hermeneutics[10]

2.1 Apologetic or 'recovery' approach to reading the Bible

Watson refers to the 'strategy of recovery'[11] of the eco-friendliness of biblical

6 Dietrich Werner, The Challenge of Environment and Climate Justice: Imperatives of an Eco-Theological Reformation of Christianity in African Contexts, in: Religion & Development 1 (2019), p. 8.

7 Gro Harlem Brundtland, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1987, p. 18.

8 Michael Bollig, Collaborative Research Center (SFB) 'Future Rural Africa. Future-Making and Social-Ecological Transformation' (2017) https://gssc.uni-koeln.de/en/research-1/cooperative-projects/crc-tr-228-future-rural-africa.

9 **See**: Sociological analysis (what is the situation in Africa); **Judge**: what God says about it; **Act**: contextual action or how are we doing to address the issue (Cardijn 1982, 72). At the stage of Act comes the need to take very seriously the insights of African ontology in dialogue with the biblical message (step 'Judge').

10 For details about existing ecological hermeneutics, see my article: Kivatsi Jonathan Kavusa, Ecological Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Biblical Texts Yesterday, Today and Onwards: Critical Reflection and Assessment, in: Old Testament Essays 32/1 (2019), p. 239–255.

11 Francis Watson, Strategies of Recovery and Resistance: Hermeneutical Reflection on Genesis 1–3 and Its Pauline Reception, in: Journal for the Study of the New Testament 45 (1992), p. 81.

texts. This reading attempts to rescue the Bible from the charge that biblical texts endorse a utilitarian view of nature. They argue that the Bible is not, itself, the problem, but that the problem has arisen through the influence of later interpreters, who obscured the original meaning[12]. They go on to attempt to demonstrate the *green* side of the Bible. We find, here, the works of the Green Bible, which printed biblical texts in green; texts, which, in their view, uphold the care of creation and *Green discipleship*.

2.2 The Earth Bible project approach to reading the Bible

This is a completely opposite reading, advocating a radical resistance to, and rejection of, the so-called 'grey texts'; texts deemed to be ecologically harmful (e.g. Gen 1:26–28). The interpreter reads the text not as steward over creation, but as kin with, a relative and member of, the earth community, sharing with it its benefits and problems[13]. The six EcoJustice principles to engage ecologically with the biblical text[14] would fit well with the African worldview. However, the call to reject or resist any so-called 'grey biblical texts' would not be digested in Africa.

2.3 Eco-feminist approach to reading the Bible

Its supporters argue that women and nature are both victims of the patriarchal conception of the world[15]. In what she coined an *'ecobosadi'* (-sadi = wife) reading of Psalm 127:3–5, Masenya J. Masenya explains how African mothers and Mother Earth are both victims of the same abuse resulting from the male drive to reproduce[16]. Nature and women are paired as objects that lack respect and ethical responsibility.

2.4 'Resistance' ecological approach to reading the Bible

Its supporters argue that environmental disasters are signs that the return of the Lord is imminent. They develop six biblical eschatological principles show-

12 David G. Horrell / Cherryl Hunt / Christopher Southgate, Appeal to the Bible in Ecotheology and Environmental Ethics: A Typology of Hermeneutical Stances, in: Studies in Christian Ethics 21/2 (2008), p. 221.

13 The Earth Bible Team, Guiding Ecojustice Principles, in: Habel, Norman C. (ed.), Reading From the Perspective of Earth, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000, p. 34.

14 Norman C. Habel, Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics, in: Norman C. Habel / Peter L. Trudinger (eds.), Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, Atlanta: SBL 2008, p. 2.

15 Robert Booth Fowler, The Greening of Protestant Thought. London: University of North Carolina Press 1995, p. 124.

16 Masenya J. Masenya, An Ecobosadi Reading of Psalm 127:3–5, in: Norman C. Habel (ed.), The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2001, p. 122.

ing that working to save the earth is implicitly acting against God's plan (1 Th 4:46–17).

2.5 The Exeter Project approach to reading the Bible

Revisionist readings do not aim to defend (recovery) or reject (resistance) the classical Christian tradition, but to 'reclaim' its ecological potential[17]. Its supporters define it as a kind of ecological reformation of the theological reflection in dialogue with global issues. The hermeneutics would need not only to interact with global issues but also with the threefold African ontology.

3. African ecological hermeneutics

African ecological hermeneutics will take insights from all the above approaches to reading the Bible, but it will reconfigure them in dialogue with the threefold African ontology.

3.1 Regaining the moral/spiritual dimension of nature

Lynn White already observed that 'what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them'[18]. It has been established, today, that science alone does not hold the key to all solutions to our crisis. Pope Jean Paul II said that the ecological problem is a problem of how we think: 'people must be told that the environmental crisis is a moral crisis'[19].

In his quest to find what Christianity has really told Africans about their relationships with nature, Emmanuel Anim was seriously disappointed, when he declared:

> 'The village in the North of Ghana, where I grew up, was located close to a forest and a river. In the forest, from ancient times onwards, the ancestors had lived. It was, therefore, sacred. In the river, the spirit of the water lived. It was, therefore, also sacred. Then, people in my village became Christian. Now, according to the new Christian worldview, there were no longer any ancestors in the forest and there were no longer any spirits in the river. Taboos were disintegrating and disappearing. Instead, the people started to make use of and exploit the forest and the water of the river for their own purposes. Today, next to this village there is no forest

17 H. Paul Santmire, Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2000, p. 10.

18 White, Historical Roots, p. 1207.

19 John Paul II, Steward of Creation, p. 2

left and the river is a cesspool. Who made a major mistake here? And for what reason?'[20]

However, wherever tradition is venerated, bio-cultural diversity blossoms. One example is a 100 year-old tree close to the Kibilizi Hospital in Rwanda, named by the locals as the *'igiti cy'umukiza'* (tree of healing). Locals look after the tree, testifying that sitting regularly under the tree can heal sickness. This belief is probably the reason why doctors, although they are Christian, have kept and maintained the tree close to the hospital. Such trees in Rwandan tradition were believed to be '*the places where a person can encounter the invisible*'[21].

According to the traditional African worldview, nature has complex dimensions, including love, fears and a sense of something mysterious. The roots of traditional African attitudes to nature lie in the idea of the interconnectedness of the spiritual world, nature and human beings[22]. The purpose of life is to maintain this cosmic web, not to conquer it. As a result, one does not seek to rule over the world, but to integrate oneself with it. For example, local populations used viable, sustainable rotational farming and shifting cultivation to prevent land overexploitation. This enabled them to 'ensure food security, while conserving the diversity of wild and domestic plants'[23]. The antithesis of this abuses nature, with adverse consequences, not only for the actor perpetrating this abuse but for the entire community.

One clear example that offers insights into the moral dimension of the created order is Hosea 4:1–3. This shows how human beings and the rest of creation are interconnected in a mystical relation, in which the failure of the Israelites (i.e. the human) inflicts severe wounds on the entire earth community[24]. The verb אָבַל (to dry) is translated as 'to mourn' (psychological meaning), while נָאְלַל ('to lose fertility' or 'to fade') is rendered as 'to languish'. The ecological decay is translated as the cry of the earth community. All human failures mentioned (lying, stealing, murder and adultery) give the impression of a society of pride[25]. The verb פרץ in verse 2 usually refers to violent actions, such as house-breaking, breaking

20 Emmanuel Anim of the Church of Pentecost Ghana, Accra, story transmitted orally (Werner, Challenge, p. 2).

21 E. Nsanzimana, Gisagara: Inkomoko y' Igiti Cy'Umukiza Kitavugwaho Rumwe, UKWEZI (2020), http://www.ukwezi.rw/mu-rwanda/Umuco/article/Gisagara-Inkomoko-y-Igiti-cy-Umukiza-kitavugwaho-rumwe.

22 Olupona 1999.

23 Douglas J. Nakashima et al., Weathering Uncertainty: Traditional Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation, Paris: UNESCO 2012, p. 57.

24 Katherine Murphey Hayes, The Earth Mourns: Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic, Atlanta: SBL 2002, p. 47.

25 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, p. 49.

barriers or defences[26]. Verse 3 conveys the idea of 'the undoing of all creation'[27]. Contrary to Amos 2, in which God plagued the earth, here, the removal of all forms of life from the surface of the earth is a result of human failures: אֶרֶץ (eretz; 'the earth') again becomes a formless void. Ecologically friendly living thereby becomes a moral duty.

In this way, Bram Büscher argues in favour of a *convivial* approach, implying a development paradigm for rural areas, which complies with the rhythm of nature and culture[28]. It does not separate nature conservation from human culture. Nature preservation is carried out as a day-to-day activity, integrated into culture, religion and economic activities based on co-operation. The oil disaster in the Niger Delta or the plundering of the tropical forest in the Congo are not only economic problems, but a clear indication of how humans have lost the moral dimension of their actions.

3.2 Community versus individuality

John Mbiti's famous expression '*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (*I am because we are)*, epitomises the African worldview of community. African community comprises the living, the unborn, the departed, ancestors' spirits, totems (animals, trees) and God. The community's central role transforms territories into collective spaces, in which fauna, flora and human beings live together in harmony[29]. The Rwandan philosopher, Alexis Kagame, defined African indigenous ontology in terms of four interrelated existences.

These are: MU**ntu –** plural BA**ntu** (human being), KI**ntu** – plural BI**ntu** – (non-human beings: fauna, flora, minerals), HA**ntu** (place, time) and KU**ntu** (means, method, approach, relationship)[30]. Ntu is what MUntu, KIntu, HAntu and KUntu equally are as forces. For instance, the presence of *Ntu* in the word KUntu (means, method, relationship), implies that even the *way*, in which humans (BAntu) interact with other beings or acts of creation (BIntu, HAntu), must be informed by a vision of nature not as an *object*, but as *forces* and *subjects*.

In this way, many African languages use the verb 'to be' instead of 'to have' when speaking about human relations with the land. The Banyarwanda say *'Ndi*

26 Francis Brown / Charles Briggs / Samuel Driver, Hebrew and English Lexicon on the Old Testament, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1968, p. 829.

27 Joachim Jeremias, Der Prophet Hosea. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1983, p. 62.

28 Bram Büscher, Close the Tap! COVID-19 and the Need for Convivial Conservation (2020), https://brambuscher.com/.

29 Giorgia Magni, Indigenous Knowledge and Implications for the Sustainable Development Agenda, in: European Journal of Education 52/4 (2017), p. 441.

30 Alexis Kagame, Sprache und Sein: Die Ontologie des Bantu des Zentralafrikas, Heidelberg: P. Kivouvou Verlag/Editions Bantoues 1985, p. 106.

n'ubuthaka' (I am with the land) instead of '*mfite ubuthaka*'. The Chichewa people of Malawi say *'Ndili ndi Nthaka'* (I am with the land). The Tswana (Botswana and South Africa) say *'Ke na le lefatshe'* (I am with the land). This ontological view implies that what might be commonly regarded as 'the possessor' and 'the possessed' retained their separate identities, 'standing side by side, in a relationship of independence from, and equality with, one another'[31].

Theologically speaking, human beings have a kind of ministerial function within the cosmic community that is Creation. In the hymn of praise of Psalm 148:1–14, the Psalmist summons all creatures, calling them 'all his hosts' in verse 2, echoing Genesis 1:31, where the expression is used to name all created beings as sharing the same fate. Psalm 148 lists a number of entities (angels, sun, moon, stars and skies, waters etc.), 22 in total, equal to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, giving an impression of fullness and totality. In a sense, the believer (the human), is 'a choir leader' leading all created beings towards God, inviting them to sing an 'Alleluia' of praise for the Creator[32].

When they lose the spirit of community, people engage in a range of unethical behaviour, seriously endangering the life of fellow human beings and other earth-members. For example, in a continent, in which agriculture depends on rainfall, deforestation means that even when rain does come, it runs off the land and its fertile topsoil. As a result, women and girls, responsible for over 70 percent of water collection, have to travel long distances to collect water. The UN estimates that, altogether, women in Sub-Saharan Africa spend 200 million hours each day collecting water for food and farming purposes, or 40 billion hours annually[33].

Kambale Kahongya showed how, due to its socio-economic benefits (wood for fuel or construction, or as charcoal etc.), the eucalyptus tree is replacing native tree species (grove forest) that used to sustain bio-cultural diversity and the fertility of the land in Butembo, DR Congo[34]. Today the land is barren, while conflicts over the acquisition of new land in the area are frequent. The locals

31 Tinyiko Maluleke, Black and African Theologies in Search of Contemporary Environmental Justice, in: Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 167 (2020), p. 19.

32 John Paul II, God Made Man the Steward of Creation. General Audience Address (2001). http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010117.pdf, p. 1.

33 Chris Williams, Violence Against Our Environment (2013), https://truthout.org/articles/violence-against-our-environment/

34 Bwiruka Kambale Kahongya, Eco-Theology in an African Perspective: Why the Delay to Embody Eco-Theology in African Christianity? In: Louk Andrianos / Michael Biehl / Ruth Gütter / Jochen Motte / Andar Parlindungan / Thomas Sandner / Juliane Stork / Dietrich Werner (eds.), Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth, Solingen: Foedus 2019, p. 123.

(Nande) use a range of words to describe the arid nature of the land: *'embwarara'* (due to desertification); *'olukuka'* (exposed rock due to perpetual erosion); *'olutswamba'* (too many roots in the soil due to overexploitation); '*olubwe*'; '*olukwesese*'. Most of them designate human-made impacts on the soil.

The JPIC commission of the Baptist Church may be active in the area of conflict resolution, but it is much less active on this issue. If the Church does not invest more time and resources on the issue, the situation will escalate.
By damaging the environment, human action not only damages society and its integrity, but themselves and their health.

3.3 Cosmological function of chieftaincy (good governance)
Africans viewed chieftaincy within the context of the human relationship with the forces of nature. African cosmology was thought of as comprising the world of the homestead (the world of harmony) and that of the bush (the world of chaos). The blossom of the land depended on how efficient the mediation of the chief (*mwami*) was. In this way, the chief mediated the roles of the rainmakers, healers of the land, priests of earth spirits, while consolidating the ancestors and domesticating the forces of nature[35]. The chief also performs periodic rituals to cleanse the land of pollution caused by unruly forces of the bush.

With his judicial and political power, the chief helped regulate social relations among his subjects and prevent actions that violated communal values and disrupted the homestead. This restricted actions likely to disrupt the cosmic balance, resolved conflicts, reduced poverty and maintained land sustainability[36]. *Thus, the bloom or waning of the land is directly bound to a waxing or failing chieftaincy.*

The events unfolding in Beni (DR Congo) and the Congolese Coltan mining areas of Rubaya illustrate how failing political governance weakens the sustainability of all. The silence of the international community vis-à-vis the ongoing human and bio-cultural tragedy in Beni is termed by Pope Francis as a 'shameful silence'[37]. Families, children, people, villages, endemic biodiversity and ecological systems are being eroded for the 'greedy profit' of corrupt officials and foreign traders[38]. Ecological commitment in Africa should include eco-justice

35 Randall Packard, Chiefship and Cosmology: An Historical Study of Political Competition, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1981, p. 30.
36 Theo Sundermeier, The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions, Hamburg: LIT 1998, p. 26.
37 Elsa Buchanan, Pope Francis Slams 'shameful Silence' of International Community on Beni Massacres in DRC (2016), https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/drc-pope-francis-slams-shameful-silence-international-community-light-beni-massacres-1576261.
38 Gaston Gramajo / Zobel Behalal / Rupert Cook et al., Final Report of the Group of Experts

and the struggle to restore good governance. With the help of their international partners (e.g. UEM, WCC), African Churches must stand together against the forces that promote self-interest and profit to the detriment of normal citizens.

Kings preside over the destiny of the society. Therefore, wherever leaders promote justice in socio-political spheres, this promotes the proper integration of social and cosmic orders[39]. The contrary results in adverse consequences for all of creation. In such a context, 1Timothy 2:1–2 recommended that petitions and prayers, intercession and thanksgiving should be made for the rulers 'so that we may lead tranquil and quiet lives in all godliness and dignity'. Resourcing themselves in the traditional concept of the African chieftaincy as mediator and the biblical concept of King, churches could raise sufficient public awareness for the ecology and contribute to the creation of a sustainable society.

4. Recommendations

To the UEM

- Supporting ecumenical initiatives to counteract the emergence of 'putting my nation/interest first' ideologies, while simultaneously prioritising common or global survival.
- Accompanying Churches in the process of the indigenisation of their liturgy, practices and ecological witness in Africa.
- Supporting Churches in the indigenisation and contextualisation of their eco-justice witness and struggle to establish good governance in Africa.

To the Churches

- Promote the indigenisation of the practices and ecological witness of African Churches, with a focus on village sustainability.
- Theological faculties should develop curricula focusing on the link between human beings and creation (nature) in African terms, including traditional knowledge and customs.
- JPIC desks should elaborate and focus their actions on issues of sustainability in Africa, namely sustainable production and consumption practices as well as resource conservation and management skills based on indigenous knowledge.

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on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, New York 2016, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2016_466.pdf, p. 25.

39 Hans Hermann Schmid, Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: Creation Theology as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology, in: Bernhard W Anderson (ed.), Creation in the Old Testament, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1984, p. 102–117.

– Empower women, who, together with the elders, are the natural custodians of indigenous knowledge systems and practices, which they pass on to younger generations through learning-by-doing, storytelling, myth narration, proverbs or songs.
– Develop a contextually relevant 'garbage theology' to combat the rise of plastic waste and the careless littering that threaten the sustainability of African seas, cities and villages.
– Acknowledge that the Church's ecological witness in Africa should include eco-justice efforts as well as the struggle for good governance.

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SILENT CRY TO SILENCE THE VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS PAPUANS

Inclusive Community to Break the Silence of Refugees in Nduga, Mimika, Intan Jaya and Puncak Jaya

Maria Niester Insoraki Komboy

1. Introduction

Papua is well known for the beauty of the island but, behind its beauty, brutality towards indigenous Papuans has been restored. As an indigenous woman, I also grew up listening to the dark times of my family and read more about our history. I was born as a Biak woman in the big city, but I also listened to my family members' stories about how the elders experienced torture at the hands of the military. In 1965, my grandfather was imprisoned in Manokwari for several months, accused by the military of being a member of the separatist movement, Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM). My family experiences motivated my concern about human rights violations. I chose a specific place in Papua that has repeatedly experienced military operations. This paper looks particularly at the Central Highlands of Papua.

I have chosen the title, 'The silent cry to silence the violence against indigenous Papuans', since it is extremely hard to break the silence of all the survivors of the multifaceted violence that has dehumanised indigenous Papuans. I want to focus attention on this issue, which has been a challenge that has haunted us since the occupation by the Indonesian Government in 1963. As a community, we need to stand with the victims of all sorts of human rights violations. Unfortunately, defending the rights of others could prove to be an enormous challenge.

That is why we need an inclusive community. Monica Seifert provides a relevant definition of inclusion, when she says that inclusion is expressed as a philosophy of the equality of each human being, respect for diversity, solidarity in community and diversity in the expression of life.[1] Hence, on the basis of this

1 Jochen Motte, Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Inclusive Communities and the Churches, in: Jochen Motte / Theodor Rathgeber (eds.), Inclusive Communities and the Churches: Realities, Challenges and Visions: Documentation of the UEM International Conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa, November 2014, Solingen: Foedus-Verlag 2016, p. 30.

definition, this paper will initially look at the military campaign in the Central Highlands of Papua and how it has had an impact on the life of the civilians who lived there. This will be followed by what it means to practice theology in the middle of violence and, to conclude, I will offer some recommendations on the issue arising out of this paper.

2. Military operations

Events in the Central Highlands of Papua revived the dark memories that were experienced by indigenous Papuans. In 1977, the military campaigns started in Jayawija, with what was known as the '*koteka operation*'. The military campaigns continued in 1981 in Wamena. Another operation was launched in 1996, known as the '*Mapenduma operation*'. The operations did not stop, coming again in 2003, July 2018 and up to the present day (2021). In this paper, I will concentrate on the most recent operation. The conflict in Nduga was sparked, when members of the local West Papua National Liberation Army (TPN-PB) killed 16 Indonesian construction workers who, against TPN-PB wishes, had observed an event, in which the TPN-PB raised the West Papuan nationalist Morning Star flag. The killings prompted swift Indonesian military reprisals, resulting in the mass internal displacement of local citizens, local acts of retaliation and a mounting sense of discontent, which the army has been unable to quell.[2] The main concerns in this paper are the killings and the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) resulting from the impact of military activity in Nduga, Intan Jaya, Mimika, and Puncak Jaya. Why? On 5th December 2018, President Jokowi gave an order to apprehend those responsible for the murder of construction workers in Nduga. This decision, in itself, caused many deaths and led to a large numbers of IDPs. In its report, the Papua Legal Aid Institute explains that three operations took place simultaneously in the Papua Province:[3]

1. The operation to apprehend the killers, i.e. members of the Armed Criminal Group, KKB, took place between December 2018 and December 2020
2. Military operations (OMSP) to secure the area and activities of the mining company PT. Freeport Indonesia by following the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PT. Freeport Indonesia and the Indonesian Army (TNI).

2 Presiden Jokowi: Kejar dan Tangkap Pelaku Pembunuhan Pekerja Trans Papua, https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/presiden-jokowi-kejar-dan-tangkap-pelaku-pembunuhan-pekerja-trans-papua.html [Accessed April 17, 2021].

3 Emanuel Gobay, Perjuangan Hak Menentukan Nasib Sendiri Bagi Bangsa Papua Merupakan Hak Konstitusional di Indonesa, Yogyakarta 2018, p. 7.

3. The operation, in response to the declaration of war delivered by Legak Telegen on behalf of the TPN-PB (or what was termed '*Operation Kamtibmas supported by Military Operations*') was conducted between March 2020 and December 2020.

The military presence in the conflict zone did not provide any security for the local community. It only brought misery. A news report had been filed by the Papuan Legal Aid Institute from the four Regencies of Nduga, Intan Jaya, Mimika and Puncak Jaya.[4] The following is a list of victims from the operation in the Central Highlands:

Nduga Regency		
Internally displaced people (IDPs)	:	37,000 people
Fatalities	:	Yulince Bugi (2019)
		Yuliana Doronggi (2019)
		Masen Kusumburue (2019)
		Tolop Bugi (2020)
		Hardius Bugi (2019)
		Elias Karunggu (2020)
		Seru Karunggu (2020)
Intan Jaya Regency		
IDPs	:	1,237 people
Gunshot wounded	:	Agustinus Duwitau (2020)
Fatalities	:	Reverend Yeremia Zanambani (2020)
		Rufinus Tigau (2020)
Mimika Regency		
IDPs	:	1,582 people
Fatalities	:	Roni Wandik (2020)
		Eden Armandi Bebari (2020)
Puncak Jaya Regency		
Gunshot wounded	:	Amanus, alias Maluk Murib (2020)

4 Gobay, Perjuangan, p. 17–18.

Fatalities	:	Atanius Murib (2020)
		Aki Alom (2020)
		Wapenus Tabuni (2020)
		Warius Murib (2020)

Two years after the military presence, their operations to apprehend those involved in the separatist movements have led to the deaths of 15 indigenous Papuans, while another two were wounded by gunshot and a further 39,919 people were internally displaced.

3. Discrimination against refugees

On the basis of my research of literature and interviews, I discovered that refugees experienced such discrimination as:

Firstly, stigmatisation. The community outside the camp was suspicious of them, believing they were part of the separatist movement because of the social and political background of their villages.[5] This has an impact on how they socialise, and their feelings of insecurity when they meet strangers.

Secondly, the lack of access to health facilities and education. Apart from living in an unwelcoming environment, refugees have to struggle with several diseases. Some have skin problems due to lack of access to clean water. Most children have the food-borne disease, trichinosis, or an infection. They receive no health care support[6]. Most people died from exhaustion, sickness and hypothermia.[7]

The military uses the school as their base in Hitadipa in the Intan Jaya Regency,[8] even though the National Commission on Human Rights for Indonesia had recommended seven months ago that the school should not be used as a military base.

Thirdly, the Government's ultimate solution is to end the conflict in Papua. In the past two years, the government has sent a number of soldiers to apprehend all those involved in the separatist movement. Unfortunately, the military operation has had an impact on the lives of thousands of people (see the table above).

5 Interview with a young Papuan Doctor (volunteer) who served with a youth team for Nduga from GKI di Tanah Papua via phone on April 20, 2021.

6 DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile (ohchr.org) [Accessed July 19, 2021].

7 Ibid.

8 Penggunaan Gedung Sekolah di Papua Sebagai Pos Militer Disayangkan - Medcom.id [Accessed July 10, 2021].

The local populations had to flee their villages to seek sanctuary, without any external humanitarian assistance. In my opinion, the treatment by the government is a vivid demonstration of how its policy of discrimination against refugees was their attempt to solve the conflict.

There were no humanitarian services, such as shelter, fundamental health care or education for the displaced community.

The figures above have emphasised the human rights violations of Article 7 of the United Nation Declarations on The Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRID):

Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group.

4. Doing theology in the middle of violence

How can the Church respond to these circumstances? Jan Aritong writes that the Church in Indonesia has failed to proclaim the Gospel of peace and justice and has even frequently become an actor, itself, in the process of reducing human dignity.[9] On the basis of its theological construction, the Church in Papua also needs to take action on this issue.

In its conflict with the OPM/TPN-PB, the Indonesian government applied primitive justice in its battle. What is primitive justice? Jean F. Rioux and Vern N. Redekop explain: The 'primitive Justice paradigm functions as revenge and represents the basic impulse to retaliate when hurt. Primitive justice can be understood in terms of Rene Girard's mimetic theory. Victims seeking revenge want to ensure that their perpetrators suffer as much as they have.'

On the basis of this definition, there is a need to be concerned about the life of the innocent community. The Indonesian government seems to be pursuing negative peace – which frames peace as the absence of war – in how it rules Papua; in Nduga, Intan Jaya, Puncak Jaya and Mimika by attempting to achieve peace through war. Even though the government has never publicly declared that these regencies are a war zone.

On the basis of these two comments concerning the military activity in Papua,

9 Jan S. Aritonang, Models of Inclusiveness in the Indonesian Church Context, in: Jochen Motte / Theodor Rathgeber (eds.), Inclusive Communities and the Churches: Realities, Challenges and Visions: Documentation of the UEM International Conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa, November 2014, Solingen: Foedus-Verlag 2016, p. 123–124.

Christians are called on to have the courage to cry out with a critical prophetic voice amid the reality that is diminishing human dignity, without losing their readiness to engage in the processes of transformation and self-correction. The Gospel of Mark tells us the story of John the Baptist. He showed no fear of the evil government. His attitude ensured he had many enemies. Mark 6:14–29 tells of the price that has to be paid for telling the truth, a story with an unhappy ending. When Jesus appeared, people thought that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead' (Mark 6:14, NIV). The text seems to tell the reader that the spirit of John – although already dead – is alive in Jesus. Herod, as governor, used his authority to kill John. Herodias (Herod's wife, who had previously been married to his brother) used the opportunity to take revenge on John. They are representative of the people that abused power. Robert Setio (Associate Professor of First Testament Studies at Duca Wacana University) reminded the reader of this text that theology, based on the death of Jesus, would not produce the same pattern as the reign of Herod. Jesus and John the Baptist used their power for the benefit of society. The Church has the power to play a major role in response to human rights violence in West Papua.

5. Building inclusive community

The short history of military operations in the Central Highlands of Papua has demonstrated the pattern of how indigenous Papuan have been treated, especially in the conflict zone. Repeated violence perpetrated against the civilian population has been deeply traumatising for the community. Even in the recent operation, the community could not trust the new people. This situation is a challenge to break the silence cry. But as a Church of Christ, it has to have the spirit of Jesus in order to have life as the Body of Christ.

Because I was curious to discover how the congregation and pastors responded to this issue, I made my own observations. The main indicator that would help confirm my hypothesis would be to look at how the pastors, in their teaching and prayer, address the issue. For two years, my brothers and sisters in Christ did not have the opportunity to experience peace. They had to mourn the loss of family members. They had to help each other to survive. According to my observation, between December 2020 and April 2021, no church sermon addressed the human rights situations in Papua. This is a real challenge to the Church. The pastor and congregation are trapped by dichotomous thinking. In my experience, involving discussions with some lay people in the Church, the common answer is, 'That is none of our business. It is something the government, police

or army should deal with.' It is a political problem, not a religious issue! The way, in which the pastors approached and interpreted the text and related to the context, confirmed my observation that there was a lack of awareness of humanity in our homeland. With an attitude like this, it is not difficult to conclude that the Church is discriminating against people, who are considered at the 'other'.

On the basis of my limited observation of how congregations and pastors attempt to come to terms with the issue, interpret their faith and how traumatised the refugees are, I believe there is a real need to build an inclusive community. Pastor Neles Tebay wrote that, in 2006, all church leaders from different faith communities came together to talk about how to pursue peace in Papua. During the conference, the committee proposed nine moral values that would create peace in Papua Land. These moral values are consciousness, awareness and respect for plurality, justice, unity, harmony, solidarity, togetherness, participation, sincere brotherhood and prosperity. In my opinion, considering the issue of human rights violations, these nine values have not appeared to have had any great influence on the lifestyle of the religious community in Papua.

In my opinion these moral values would, indeed, be core principles on the way to building an inclusive community. To break the silence, both the refugees and all the Christian have to learn to cross their boundaries, so that, together, they can build a community that can help one another to demand the rights and justice, to which they are entitled in *Tanah Papua* (Papua Land).

5. Conclusion

As Christians, we need to be distressed by the immoral attitudes shown toward others, irrespective of their religion, race, social status, colour, age or gender. Being an inclusive community, requires us to break down the walls that have separated us, so that we can embrace each other and be united as one. We need to ensure that our arms are open to invite others into our life. The spirit of John the Baptist and Jesus will enable us to speak up for those who cannot speak.

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WHERE ARE MY BROTHERS?

The Story of Dinah in Genesis 34 and its Lessons for our Response to Women Crying for Help against Sexual Assault and Rape in Eastern DR Congo

Marthe Maleke Kondemo

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been labelled the 'rape capital' of the world.[1] It has also been described as the worst place on earth to be a woman. The country's history is littered with civil wars and brutal acts of sexual violence. For almost two decades, the Eastern DRC has experienced an alarming rate of ongoing non-international and internationalised armed conflicts. Civilians have been drawn into the conflicts, which have been driven by a weak government and the lure of rich mineral resources. People in the east of the country continue to suffer the worst forms of abuse, such as ethnic massacres, killings, mass rape, torture, arbitrary arrests, mutilation, sexual slavery and abduction by armed local and rebel forces. The mass rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls and women (and sometimes against men and boys) cause enormous pain and affect victims and the community directly and indirectly.

The pattern of abuse is, in part, due to the lack of accountability for past crimes, as well as the policy of integrating former rebels into the security forces without formal training and despite their involvement in past human rights abuses. While there has been some progress in prosecuting cases in recent years, the vast majority of military and police officers responsible for grave human rights abuse remain unpunished and in active service. Despite numerous attempts to implement peace agreements between warring states and parties, a democratically elected government, the reformation of laws, a revised constitution and the presence of the world's largest United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force, the rule of law in the DRC remains weak.[2] Although the government also

1 Nicholas D Kristof / Sheryl WuDunn, Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide, New York: Alfred A. Knopf 2009, p. 2.

2 United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) United Nations Security Council Resolution 1925 (1 July 2010), p. 1.

recently declared a curfew in the east of the country, rape and killing continue to be reported. The seed of rape is now spreading across the country, as men and boys organise themselves in gangs to kidnap, kill and rape women. This occurrence is a pointer to the decline in social values.

In Genesis 34, Dinah, Leah's daughter with Jacob, is raped by Shechem the prince of the land. On learning about her rape, her brothers react strongly by engaging in a mass killing of all the men of the city, but their father condemned Simeon and Levi for their action. The story ends with Levi and Simeon's question to their father (Gen 34:31), which may be understood as an accusation against him for not standing up for Dinah against Shechem.

Informed by my DRC context of human rights abuse, impunity and corruption, this article reads the story of Dinah as that of rape and examines the motive behind the action of Jacob's sons, as reported in Genesis 34, as a means of highlighting the failures of the DRC system to support and care for abused women. While Dinah's brothers expressed concern for, and sympathised with, their sister, Jacob kept silent for fear of being attacked and sent out of the country. Based on Congolese women survival stories, I read the story of the rape of Dinah to identify and deconstruct androcentric elements both in Genesis 34 and in the Congolese patriarchal culture and critically analyse Jacob's silence and failure to stand by his daughter. If read from a gender sensitive point of view, can Genesis 34 challenge the Congolese government to stand against the oppressor and produce more practical law enforcement strategies to end rape, sexual assault impunity against women and offer special support and service to the victims? Thus, this essay is a call to society in general and to the DRC institutions that are mainly headed by men, to hear women's cry for help in the context of gender-based violence, sexual assault and rape and act accordingly.

2. Women victims of rape

Horrific levels of rape and other forms of sexual violence have plagued Eastern DRC for almost two decades. It is estimated that as many as 200,000 survivors of rape live in the DRC today. Soldiers and police officers, as well as Congolese and foreign armed groups, are among the main perpetrators. They use sexual violence as 'a weapon of war' to control the region and destroy families and communities. Their targets include girls as young as two years old and women aged 80 and older, as well as some men and boys. Sadly, 'Many rapes, notably those committed by armed groups, involved genital mutilation or other extreme

brutality. Several armed groups also abduct women and girls as sex slaves'[3]. The perpetrators often harm their victims with machetes and other weapons before or after raping them. Many victims develop serious medical complications following rape or even die from their wounds.[4] Another troubling situation is that of rape performed by some members of the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations, who rape women and girls as young as 10 years old, sometimes in exchange for food and sometimes with knives or sticks.[5] In June 2011, an armed rebel group entered several villages and abducted a large number of women. The victims were tortured and repeatedly raped in their homes or in the street. Some victims were raped in front of their family members and neighbours to humiliate them and thus cause their exclusion from the family circle and community.[6] The result is low self-esteem and, for many, the only solution is to leave their families to take refuge in a place, where no one knows them. For children, it is a terrible thing to be abandoned by a humiliated mother and father. This shows how rape destroys the family and community.

Referring to his daily contacts with rape victims, the Congolese gynaecologist and Nobel Peace prize-winner, Dr Dennis Mukwege, says that 'the words "rape" or "sexual violence" cannot fully translate the horror that hundreds of thousands of women are living with in this part of the world'.[7] Alarmingly, he notes that in certain villages, over 90 per cent of women have been victims of sexual abuse.[8] To call rape simply an act of brutality or aggression does not fully capture the full nature and horror of this crime: the severe lack of resources, including human resources in the judicial system, 'exacerbates impunity'; the stigmatisation of victims and a reluctance to pursue rape cases; the high cost of legal proceedings; the lack of protection for victims and witnesses; and the

3 Amnesty International, Democratic Republic of Congo: Amnesty International's Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (2009), p. 5. Available at: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR62/009/2009/en/536d63eb-4c71-4c19-bd19-c0 14966bb7cf/afr620092009en.pdf.

4 Democratic Republic of Congo: Ending Impunity for Sexual Violence. New Judicial Mechanism Needed to Bring Perpetrators to Justice, p. 1, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/10/democratic-republic-congo-ending-impunity-sexual-violence.

5 Amnesty International. 'Stop Violence against Women' (2004), p. 1. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/92000/afr620182004en.pdf.

6 Report on Violence against Women in North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Alternative Report for the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 55th Session July 8–26, 2013, p. 5.

7 Rape as a Weapon of War: Accountability for Sexual Violence in Conflict – Hearing before the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and the Law of the Committee on the Judiciary's 110th Congress, 2nd Session, 1 April 2008, p. 1.

8 Rape as a Weapon of War, p. 1.

increasing dogmatisation and stigmatisation or 'shaming' within society.[9] In his UN address on 25th November 2006, Kofi Annan, observed that, 'Violence against women causes untold misery, harms families across generations and impoverishes communities. It stops women from fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth and undermines development'.[10] Rape fundamentally destroys the future of society because when women are destroyed, there is no possibility of renewal of the community.

3. The rape of Dinah

Genesis 34 is about rape, power and violence. It is a complex story, mainly because of its complicated ethical dilemma marked by the mass murder of the rapist and the members of his family community. The story begins with the freedom of a young woman, who leaves home to go and visit the daughters of the land and it ends with a question from her brothers to their father, 'Should our sister be treated like a prostitute?' (Gen 34:31). Dinah's plan to visit other women turns into a nightmare. In verse 2, it is said that "Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her. He *took* her, *lay* with her, and *raped* her. Shechem uses his masculinity, power and position to satisfy his lust. His action deprives Dinah of her freedom. Shechem then falls in love with Dinah and wants to marry her. Her brothers, however, do not trust him. They trick the Prince, his father Hamor and the male inhabitants of the town into being circumcised and, then, kill them. On hearing of these events, Dinah's father Jacob, who was silent, is now furious. He accuses his sons of stirring up trouble, making him afraid of being attacked and destroyed. His shame was based on his fear and insecurity. The man, who had shamed his brother and deceived his father and father-in-law, was now concerned about his own reputation. Jacob's failure to act or speak seems to be due to his fear of the powerful Canaanites.

Over the centuries, the dominant exegetical traditions have tended to acknowledge that the sexual event that occurred between these two characters in Genesis 34:2 was both violent and coercive. However, a few modern scholars are rather more ambivalent in their interpretation of the events depicted in verse 2. Thus, some have described Shechem's encounter with Dinah as a 'seduction',[11] a

9 Joanna Mansfield, Prosecuting Sexual Violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: Obstacles for Survivors on the Road to Justice, in: African Human Rights Law Journal 9 (2009), p. 367–408, here: 370.

10 Kofi Annan, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November (2006), p. 1, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10738.doc.htm.

11 Mary Douglas, In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers,

'liaison', or an act of 'passion',[12] thereby trying to imply that it ought to be focalised less as a brutal assault than as a typical, normative display of sexual desire.[13] Indeed, some suggest that it is much more likely that this sexual encounter between the two characters was consensual and mutually desired.[14] More recently, there is a far more radical challenge within biblical interpretation by scholars, who question the very notion that Dinah was in fact the victim of a sexual assault, based only on the textual evidence from the brief description in verse 2. Such a reading normalises Shechem's action as that of a love story, causing some readers to question it as an episode of rape. Given "that the similarities of plot and language between Genesis 34 and the other biblical stories of rape or attempted rape reinforce the argument that here, too, it is a case of rape, not of seduction, even though the victim's voice is not heard."[15] The lack of a radical separation of violence and sexuality that enables us to confront the power of the cultural construction of masculinity may normalise male sexual aggression.

When we turn to consider how Dinah's rape is presented in Genesis 34:2, it is striking to note that the narrator by no means wasted words in furnishing his reader with a detailed or comprehensive depiction of the episode. In a detached way, the narrator combines three verbs to describe Dinah's rape: 'He ***took*** her, and he ***laid*** with her, and he ***raped*** her'. The verbs underscore the increasing severity of the violence. We are granted no access to the underlying motive for Shechem's action, nor does the narrator spend any time in revealing Dinah's reaction to being used as the object of such an apparently precipitous sexual attack. What we observe is that, after the rape, Dinah's role shifted from being an active subject to that of a passive subject. Without either explanation or warning, she is no longer a woman going out on her own to seek female company but, instead, is an assaulted and abused object in the hands of a man, who appears to have neither sought her consent nor given much thought to her wellbeing.[16]

Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1993, p. 177; Calum M. Carmichael, Women, Law and Genesis Traditions, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1979.

12 Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982, p. 274–276.

13 Ogden Alice Bellis, Helpmates, Harlots, Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible, Westminster: John Knox Press 1994, p. 89–90.

14 Hilary Lipka, Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2006, p. 185–187; Lyn M. Bethel, What If Dinah Is not Raped? (Genesis 34), in: JSOT 64 (1994), p. 19–36.

15 Yael Shemesh, Rape is Rape is Rape: The Story of Dinah and Shechem (Genesis 34), in: Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 119/1 (2007), p. 2–21, here: 20.

16 Caroline Blyth, Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence: A Feminist Re-Reading of Dinah's Voicelessness in Genesis 34, in: Biblical Interpretation 17 (2010), p. 483–506, here: 486.

Dinah's rape is marginalised and she is silenced. Informed by women's stories of rape, therefore, Dinah's silence can be explained by the damage that the violence has caused in her. Whether in biblical Israel or in contemporary culture, rape assaults women to the very core of their physical, psychological and spiritual being. It destroys their relationship with the world around them and their very own sense of self. Women, who have been raped, confront the threat of death directly and concretely as they experience raw terror in the realisation of their own powerlessness and vulnerability. To deny the absolute horror and brutality implicit in the act of rape is to radically undermine the victim's suffering. It is to minimise and silence the reality of her suffering and to deny her status as the wounded victim of a truly atrocious act.

4. Jacob's silence: the anger and outrage of Dinah's brothers

Regarding Dinah's rape, the text notes that, "Jacob held his peace until they came" (Gen 34:5). Jacob was curiously silent about the incident but the reason behind his silence is not clear[17]. Jacob does not condemn the whole affair but "keeps silent" and prepares to do business with Hamor. Two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, however, consider Shechem's rape of Dinah a shocking outrage. In their view, their sister has been made unclean. Like a prostitute, she has become a person of outsider status, unfit to be a bride.[18] This section gives the impression that Jacob's sons were far more offended and outraged than their father Jacob was. In contrast to their father Jacob, who did not respond immediately, Simeon and Levi reacted strongly, 'They grieved, and they were very depressed'. Their anger led them to kill Shechem and his father Hamor as well as the men of Shechem, and to capture the women and children. Although the severity of their action is difficult to tolerate, the murder seems to be a consequence of the rape. The brothers are driven by the fact that Shechem oppressed Dinah, their sister.

The story of Tamar's rape in 2 Samuel 13 and that of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 and 20 describe similar acts. On each occasion, the woman's male kin respond with an act of violence. The violence associated with their action goes beyond the simple desire to take vengeance on the rapists. When we consider

17 Kenneth L Barker, Kohlenberger John R III. Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary. An Abridgment of the expositor's Bible Commentary. Vol 1: Old Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House 1994, p. 43.

18 Suzan Niditch, Genesis, in: Carol. A. Newsom / Sharon H Ringe / Jacqueline E Lapsley (eds.), The Women's Bible Commentary. Twentieth-Anniversary Edition. Revised and Updated, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2012, p. 41.

Genesis 34, we see this same tendency for violence by the rape victim's male kin. Simeon and Levi respond by initiating an act of vengeance that goes well beyond any desire for personal retribution against the rapist. It is as though, in each narrative, a woman's rape comes to symbolise a serious infraction of the rules that govern interfamilial and intertribal order; this most personal violation of the victim's body is thus reconceptualised as a catalyst that ultimately unleashes the violence that results from such an infraction.[19] Alice Keefe[20] has noted that, in these three texts, 'narrative representation of the woman's experience of rape embodies the dynamics of the social chaos which follows. Thus, the horrors of rapes in these narratives serve as loci of meaning, in which the reality of war as the fragmentation of community life gains powerfully graphic expression'.

It may be difficult for the modern reader to process the fact that Jacob and, by extension, the brothers were considered the primary injured party in the biblical narrative, and not Dinah! Even more troublesome is the possibility that Dinah is being partially blamed for what happened to her in the opening line of the story. However, one should understand that the story of Dinah was set in a historical context in which women were regarded frequently as objects. By raping Dinah, the Hivite prince seriously dishonoured the Jacobites, demonstrating their incapacity to protect and defend 'their women', and thereby destroying any notion they might have entertained about their authority and power. Unlike their father, the brothers appeared to believe that such a dishonouring violation of community order was not something that could be resolved by Hamor and Shechem's seemingly generous offer of economic and political recompense. Money, marriage or any form of favour could not make her disgrace go away.

The brothers however want to restore the honour of their family. They reject the possibility that Shechem should redeem his action through payment. To accept the proposals would have been to violate the sacred principles of their call as a family and to sacrifice the promises of God for worldly gain. Dinah cannot be traded for economic gain. The brothers insist on Dinah's wellbeing.[21] Verse 27 mentions that the other sons of Jacob join in the attack of the city, slay the inhabitants and plunder the city because their sister has been defiled. The writer does not deplore the situation; he seems to look favourably on the massacre of the Shechemites, for which all of Israel takes responsibility.

19 Caroline Blyth, The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence, New York: Oxford University Press 2006, p. 89.

20 Alice A. Keefe, Rapes of Women/Wars of Men, in: Semeia 61 (1993), p. 79.

21 Susanne Scholz, What 'Really' Happened to Dinah? A Feminist Analysis of Genesis 34 (2001), p. 14, http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/01_2/s.pdf.2001.

What seems clear is that the tension between the horror of the rape and the enormity of the killings encouraged many interpreters to minimise the rape. To many scholars, the rape of one woman pales in comparison to the murder of many men. Yet, the widespread elevation of the rapist and the indifference toward his accountability demand an alternative interpretation. This interpretation is also illustrated by the silence of Jacob. His silence is interpreted as being reflective of a calm spirit and a desire to act in a way that was beneficial to both Israel and the neighbouring cities. While Jacob's sons lacked self-control and acted irrationally, Jacob tried to act with honour, forgiveness and patience. However, his behaviour does not help the rapist to regret his act and repent. Jacob's failure to respond was a demonstration of weakness, which also suggests an unwillingness to support his daughter.

Early commentators on this text do not condemn the sons of Jacob, but they do condemn Shechem's behaviour. Was the reaction of the sons of Jacob justified? The contemporary reader can only speculate. While it is easy to judge their action from a modern perspective, I believe that the Hebrew writer has left sufficient indications in the text for us to understand and find meaning in the story. Simeon and Levi answer their father in the form of a question, 'Should he treat our sister as a prostitute?' (Gen 34:31), suggests that they felt justified and that the narrator leaves the audience to contemplate the question and reflect on the story.

Simeon and Levi became the heroes, not because of the murders they committed, but because of their desire for social justice. They were not motivated by greed, power or envy but by anger and a feeling of powerlessness. They did not consider their personal interests while negotiating with the rapist, the same person who destroyed the life of their sister, or with the people who destroyed their peace and integrity for the sake of maintaining their position in the land and of gaining wealth and protection; what mattered most was their sister's dignity. Someone was supposed to act to put an end to the rape culture that was taking place. Hence, I partially agree with Mitchell that the execution or threat of reprisal encourages an adversary to refrain from or discontinue violating the laws of war. In other words, reprisals provide an important deterrent or compliance effect.[22] However, it does not necessarily mean violence. The first response to an offence should not be a counter offence or violence. A reprisal attack usually leads to counter-reprisal attacks, destroying more lives, increasing the level of insecurity, and affecting economic activities. Violence does not achieve much.

22 Andrew D. Mitchell, Does One Illegality Merit Another? The Law of Belligerent Reprisals in International Law, in: Military Law Review 170 (2001), p. 155–177, here: 177.

Instead, it creates a cycle of violence. Therefore, laws must be established against the oppressor and to create safeguards to prevent the perpetuation of violence.

5. Giving victims a voice

Rape has long been considered a crime so unspeakable, so shameful to its victims, that they are rendered mute, cloaked in anonymity.[23] Rape remains the most under-reported of crimes. As well as the physical assault, rape, for the victim, is an act of aggression against her emotions and her mental system. It is an attack on her person, her personal dignity, her intimate self: an act of aggression against her very identity. A victim knows that, as a person, she/he has been reduced to being an object or thing, used by the rapist to vent his anger and hatred; this why most victims feel worthless, 'dirty', 'infected'.[24] After being raped, some survivors begin to hate their bodies, believing they are the cause of their suffering. And that is why many decide to remain silent.

The police and judiciary, media, medical personnel and members of the community usually contextualise rape within the boundaries of accepted sexuality. By doing so, they fail to recognise that coercive acts of sexual aggression are occasions of unlawful assault that brutalise women on a physical, emotional and spiritual level. Consequently, in many cases, female victims of rape mistrust the judicial system, regarding it as corrupt. We should not be surprised, then, that so many of these women never share their terrible trauma with anyone; they choose stigma or silence rather than endure the contempt or hostility they may face from those, who should support them and encourage them to heal.[25]

In contrast to the account of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother, Amnon (2 Sam 13:12–14), we do not hear Dinah speak or cry out in resistance before Shechem took her. We are not told who and how the message of Dinah's rape reached Jacob. According to verse 26, Dinah never left the rape scene. Dinah's experience is not an important factor in the story. The text does not tell us how she felt about Shechem or about her brothers' revenge, or even what happened to her after she was rescued. Some commentators assume that the traumatic nature of the rape affected Dinah, and it would have led to her fate as a silenced rape victim. 'By being denied the opportunity to share her experiences with her family and community, by being faced only with social disgrace, devaluation and shame, Dinah suffers perpetually the fate of the silenced rape victim, iso-

23 Mitchell, Illegality, p. 119.
24 Bülent Diken / Carsten B. Laustsen, Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War, Body & Society 11 (2005), p. 111–128, here: 113.
25 Blyth, Terrible Silence, p. 109.

lated, stigmatised, and deprived of a supportive audience'.[26] Like the many rape survivors who feel they can never share their experience with anyone, even with family and friends, Dinah is also denied the opportunity to give voice to her own experience of sexual violence. For Ulrike Bail, 'Silence and silencing are characteristic of approaches to sexual violence against women. Women's stories are silenced, or if these stories are told at all, women's voices are excluded'.[27] In the case of Dinah, we are not told if her silence was her own decision or that of the narrator, who was more concerned with her brothers' reaction than her feelings.

For decade, women were not allowed to speak and share their stories. For some, it was by fear of being stigmatised but for others by lack of safe space. In 2009, women, all victims of sexual violence, from various provinces gathered in the DRC capital, Kinshasa, to break the silence around sexual violence. They spoke publicly about their ordeal, calling for the nationwide mobilisation of support for the '*Stop au Viol*' campaign. They issued a call to the Church and to people in positions of power and influence in the country to take concrete action beyond public declarations of goodwill, in order to effectively end the sexual violence that has ravaged and humiliated thousands of women and girls in the DRC.[28] The women explained why they decided to speak out, standing on behalf of all women:

> "It is a cry on behalf of all women, those who have spoken out, and those still in hiding because of the stigmatisation and the shame. One survivor denounced the complicity that exists between the rapist and those who refuse to act when she argued, 'In my eyes, all those who tolerate sexual violence turn a blind eye, refuse to denounce and condemn these barbaric acts – they are all as guilty as those who commit these crimes...' Another survivor said, 'We have chosen to speak out so that we can help each other to get back to our families and our lives ... I know now there is a network of activists all over the country. I am now a member, but until you speak up you cannot be heard.'"[29]

Remaining silent is a weapon that continues to destroy their lives. Naming it is the first step to dismantling the rape culture. To speak and be heard is to have

26 Blyth, Terrible Silence, p. 505.
27 Ulrike Bail, The Breath after the Comma: Psalm 55 and Violence against Women, in: JRA1 (1999), p. 5–18, here: p. 7.
28 Breaking the Silence: DRC Rape Survivors Take Their Campaign to the Capital and Call for a Move beyond Pledges to Concrete Action (2009), p. 1.
29 Breaking the Silence: DRC Rape Survivors, p. 2.

power over one's life. To be silent is to have that power denied.[30] Breaking the silence is an effective way of eradicating rape and other forms of sexual violence. Therefore, Congolese women refuse to be silenced by their rapist or any other person. They do not want someone else to change their stories or try to fill in the gap created by their silence. Women's voices are a wake-up call to their fathers and brothers to find concrete solution to free them from the hands of rapists and put an end to their suffering.

6. Where are my brothers?

The prevalence of sexual violence raises questions about human nature. The silence of the Church and society on sexual violence raises questions about the nature of community. The structure of oppression in sexual violence raises questions about God.[31] All too often, the brutality and destructiveness inherent in rape and the injustice underlying its subversion of women's sexual and bodily integrity are overlooked by the institutions and individuals, who constitute the victim's community.[32] Jacob's silent and impassive character appears to conceptualise Dinah's rape, not as a serious assault on his daughter's physical and sexual integrity, but rather as an event that had serious political repercussions for him. Unlike their father, Dinah's brothers appear to be deeply moved when they hear the news of her violation – they are 'grieved and deeply angry'.

Jacob's words in verse 30 suggest that his emotional energies are entirely bound up with his own political concerns and not with any empathic appreciation of Dinah's suffering as a victim of rape. At no point throughout this narrative does Jacob express any compassion, anxiety or concern for Dinah's welfare, or acknowledge the terrible ordeal that she has just endured. He does not even attempt to talk to her after her return home.[33] Instead, he maintains absolute silence and an emotional distance between himself and his daughter. For whatever reason, Jacob refused to protect Dinah. Like Dinah, women often suffer twice: firstly because of the rape itself and, secondly, due to the lack of attention they receive from their families and communities. Jacob is perceived to be someone, who is more concerned about his own honour and reputation. However, Simeon and Levi are motivated to act because of the damage inflicted on the honour of

30 Courtney E. Ahrens, Being Silenced: The Impact of Negative Social Reactions on the Disclosure of Rape, in: AJCP 38 (2006), p. 263–274, here: 263.

31 James Newton Poling, The Abuse of Power, Nashville: Abingdon, 1991, p. 13–14.

32 Ann J. Cahil, Rethinking Rape, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 132–144.

33 Mary Anna Bader, Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible: A Multi-Methodological Study of Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13, New York 2006, p. 115.

their sister. Jacob is overcome by an egocentric pragmatism that is concerned only with his own safety and the potential materialistic gain from the interaction with the Hivites. Simeon and Levi, however, are guided by what Sternberg calls their 'idealism'.[34] He concludes that Simeon and Levi are the heroes of the story. Through their violent reprisal against Shechem's crime, the narrator has stored up enough sympathy with the reader to balance the excesses of their violence.

'Does our sister deserve to be treated as a prostitute?' According to Clark, this question not only requires an answer but a response. If the answer is yes, then we are being careless and abusing our power to humiliate our sisters, as Shechem did. If the answer is no, then how should we respond? Should we continue in silence out of fear, hesitation or weakness, as Jacob did? If the answer is no, then, the Hebrew writer encourages us to respond as leaders of a community of faith. The community of faith is challenged to respond through strong leadership, confrontation, boldness and a strong faith in Yahweh.[35] It is lamentable that rape is rarely the subject matter of sermons delivered from our pulpits or in discussions during our meetings. Although churches have been helping women to move beyond their traumatic situations, in some cases providing material, financial and medical support, there is an absence of adequate support structures for survivors and victims of violence. This is compounded by the laxity of justice, with cases of violence being rarely criticised in official reports unless they end in death. The Church, therefore, should continue to play a more proactive role in speaking out and advocating on behalf of women. It must be active in processes of transformation – through preaching and teaching – that speaks out against the root causes of rape. The fact that rape is rarely the subject matter of sermons and discussions in our classrooms, is lamentable. The text of Deuteronomy 22:23–29 assumes that a raped woman's screams would be heard by others, and she would be rescued. There seems to be no excuse for the community's silence or failure to respond to the issues of abuse or sexual violence. Keeping silent about sexual violence or failing to acknowledge the troubling reality of rape and sexual violence is to be complicit. The abuse of women affects the whole society; without a woman, there is no family, church, or nation.

Indeed, Jacob's silence and hesitancy, before and during the negotiations, indicate a failure to lead. It seems Jacob was going through a leadership crisis. Jacob's refusal to do what is right for his family has pushed two of his sons to do something, something terrible in response. "When God-appointed heads do not

34 Meir Sternberg, Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics: From Reading to Counter Reading, in: Journal of Biblical Literature 111 (1992), p. 463–488, here: 474.

35 Ron Clark, The Silence in Dinah's Cry, in: European Electronic Journal for Feminist Exegesis (2006), p. 1; http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/06_1/clark_silence.htm#_edn65.

take appropriate leadership, it creates a void, which is often filled sinfully"[36] He not only failed to protect his daughter, he also failed to control his sons' actions. Hamor and Shechem displayed more unity than Jacob and his sons. Like Jacob, the DRC has also faced a leadership crisis for many years, with its leaders failing not only to provide protection but also to take effective action that would guarantee the peace and security of their territory. Rebel groups show greater unity, protected by their own country and the others supporting them, while the Congolese are killing and destroying themselves in the pursuit of power and wealth by renewing alliances and agreements with the very people that are responsible for the destruction of their country. Their personal interests and the wellbeing of their families come first. However, good leadership should not allow a woman or anyone else in the community to be humiliated. Whereas Simeon and Levi acted deceitfully, Jacob refused to act. Helpless women and girls are raped and society offers no firm resistance against it. The DRC daughters, who are abducted, abused and made sexual slaves, need their brothers, fathers, uncles and husbands to rescue them as Dinah's brothers did. The government should, therefore, put in place mechanisms that empower women, amplify their voices, support survivors and promote gender justice and equality. Rape culture is sustained because laws addressing violence against women are either non-existent or not enforced.

To combat sexual violence, a number of provisions have been enacted in the Congolese Constitution. The legislative and judicial reform launched in 2006 was less tolerant of sexual violence and friendlier towards women. The new laws impose a penalty of five to 20 years' imprisonment for rape and stricter penalties were established for indecent assault, which does not include penetration. Despite the progress made through these new laws, there have been few successful prosecutions of indecent assault and rape. The failed national justice system has contributed to the increasing level of violence and impunity. Even though the government has ratified numerous conventions calling for an end to all forms of discrimination against women, the DRC government's lack of support and the corrupt system imply that women have little access to the legal institutions due to the high cost of legal representation.

Perpetrators, including leaders, must be brought to justice. Government officials should send strong and clear warnings to soldiers, officers, combatants and warlords that rape carries a high penalty. It is imperative that the government takes concrete action to put an end to the insecurity, subdue the armed rebel groups and restore state authority.

36 Genesis Part Two: Patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. Available at: https://calvarychapelbishop.weebly.com/uploads/1/1/0/6/11063031/genesis_part_two__12-50_.pdf.

It is clear that ending violence against women and impunity is extremely difficult in the DRC because of the absence of effective laws and non-implementation of the ratified ones by an ineffective and corrupt system. However, Genesis 34 narrative contains indispensable tools that could be used to address the insidious rape that remains a taboo and continues to cause untold suffering to so many women. Read from a gender sensitive point of view, Genesis 34 should serve to challenge and stimulate the Congolese society and its judiciary to become the conscience of the nation by coming up with effective safeguard actions, and creating awareness, preventing, and ending impunity against all forms of violence against women and standing by the women against the oppressors. If Dinah's brothers' violent reprisal has been challenged, Jacob's silence and inaction should be challenged even more. Dinah's story has the potential to positively empower the society to stand against the evil being done to Congolese mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. It should also empower women to talk for themselves and not allow the narrator to silence them as in the case of Dinah.

Being one of the social institutions, the church is called to be a robust support system in fighting violence against women. Instead of pretending that nothing happened, victims and survivors feel affirmed when there are trusted individuals willing to process with them and walk the journey with them. Most of churches practice grace and love, but we should acknowledge we have a hard time with accountability.

Therefore, we recommend that church:

1. Should encourage all churches member to challenge and face the painful issue of violence against women in all its manifestations.
2. Acknowledge that Rape Culture Exists
3. Make sure that offenders are brought to justice
4. Assist the desk for Women in their efforts to address the issue.
5. Make Room for Women's Voices
6. Provide avenues for Professional Counselling by allocating funds to retain professional counsellors to be on call for members who have suffered sexual assault.

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RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PERPETRATING AGGRESSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A Challenge to the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC)

Joel Mbongi Kuvuna

Introduction

This research is about the role the Protestant Church in the DR Congo plays on the on-going situation of war mostly in the Eastern part of the Country. It is naturally easy to respond violently when aggression is perpetrated. How can the Church respond to the perpetrating situation of aggression in the DR Congo? The objective of the research is to recall the role of the Church to act peacefully in the search of peace. However, acting in nonviolent way remains a challenge.

The research will describe the Church challenges by demonstrating that the perpetrating situation of aggression in the DR Congo is an international injustice and plot. A cycle of crisis is seen from the independence up today. The Church must then play its prophetic role. An interview was conducted to understand the key role player of the war in the Eastern part of the DR Congo. A theological reflexion was made to understand how the Church can respond to violence. Should people respond to violence to solve the aggression situation?

This reflexion will end up by giving some recommendations to the Protestant Church in the DR Congo and to the UEM.

1. Describing church challenges in the DR Congo

The Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) in DR Congo faces a great many challenges alongside the on-going Covid-19 pandemic and crisis. Some of these challenges include dealing with military conflicts, numerous rape cases and the killing of civilians. However, there is a great deal of uncertainty and conflicting ideas concerning the role played by the Church throughout the country. For

instance, the Church talks about peace when there is no peace. Hence, at a time, when people are being killed on a daily basis, the usefulness of the Church needs to be reconsidered. How could or should the Church respond to the killing of innocent people? Should it encourage the use weapons for self-defence? Or should it promote non-violence as a retaliation strategy to counter military violence? The reality is that in a context, in which war is being perpetrated, the Church is powerless with regard to violence and discrimination.

Sometimes the Church tries to raise its voice in different cases of injustice in the country. However, it should be emphasized that the voice taken by the Congolese Church depends on its leader. Somehow, the vision of the prophetic voice is also related to the vision or understanding of the prophetic role of its leader. Among the challenges of the Church is to differentiate the prophetic positioning and the individual and personalized conflict. Opposing ideas with a political leader does not mean disliking or hating political leaders. It might not be confusing when exercising a prophetic ministry. Especially when the political rulers are from one tribe and the leaders of a prophetic Church from another tribe, this is blamed on tribal hatred. Such is the case of the prophetic voice of the Church of Christ in the Congo led by a native of the Province of Equateur (Mungala). His prophetic positioning can be misunderstood as hateful because the political leader is from Kasai Province (Muluba).

Another challenge of the Protestant Church in Congo is its vision of unity in diversity. Each community belonging to the corporation (ECC) is autonomous, capable of imposing its socio-political vision as well.

2. The war in DR Congo, international injustice, and plot

The eastern regions of the DR Congo have been dominated by poverty and protracted war since 1997, frequently accompanied by the rape of women and young girls. It is estimated that, since 1996, nearly 40 per cent of women in Eastern DR Congo have been raped or mass raped. According to some scholars, 27.5 per cent of African child soldiers in recent years were Congolese[1]. Between August 2016 and July 2017, 80 mass graves were discovered in the country.

Wamu Oyatambwe considers the crisis in DR Congo and the Great Lakes Region, as described by Breytenbach, as probably one of the most complicated and perplexing events the post-cold war world has seen.[2]

1 Joel Kuvuna Mbongi, Building a Human Rights Culture in the Context of Child Soldiers: A Challenge to the Protestant Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Master thesis, University of Kwazulu Natal 2015, p. 2.

2 Wamu Oyatambwe / Stefaan Smis, Complex Political Emergencies, the international

Summarising the cycle of violence after the independence of DR Congo, Frank van Acker estimates that around 3 million of the total civilian population of 20 million lost their lives between 1998 and 2001. Not only through the use of weapons but also as a consequence of the other wide-ranging impacts of war, such as lack of food, clean water, medicines and shelter. Around three-quarters of children died before the age of two. Despite this sad reality, the conflict in DR Congo is acknowledged as not only the deadliest but also the most ignored war since the Second World War; international institutions have never declared the widespread killing here to be genocide, comparable with other similar conflicts.[3]

In his paper, Tony Stewart summarises the number of people that have died in DR Congo conflicts. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), between 1998 and 2002, DR Congo lost around 3.3 million people. This number far exceeds the total number of victims of all the world crises recorded within the same period. For example, the loss of people in Bosnia was estimated to be around 250,000, 800,000 in Rwanda, 12,000 in Kosovo, and 70,000 in Darfur, Sudan.[4] The DR Congo conflict is generally viewed as a battle for control over minerals such as gold, coltan and diamonds.

According to Actualité.CD (a Congolese media website specialising in political, security and economic information), between July and December 2020, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) targeted the cities of Beni, Irumu and Mambasa in Eastern DR Congo. Of the 468 people killed, 108 were women and 15 were children. A further 457 people were forced to disappear, including 62 women and 9 children. In the face of such a crime, what should the Church do?

Since the independence a cycle of violence usually encouraged the illegitimate extraction of raw materials as well as illicit arms trafficking in Congolese border areas.

- Soon after independence in 1960, a war between Kasaian and Katangese secessionists broke out.
- The second instance is the Mulele's rebellion which began in the Bandundu Province and set the Kivu, Maniema and the Province Orientale on fire (1963–1965).
- In 1966 a mutiny took place by Katangese gendarmes in Kisangani.

community & the Congo conflict, in: Review of African Political Economy 93/94 (2002), p. 414.

3 Frank van Acker, Where Did All the Land Go? Enclosure & Social Struggle in Kivu (DR Congo), in: Review of African Political Economy Vol 32, Issue 103 (2005), p. 79–98.

4 Tony Stewart et al., Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A nationwide survey, in: Lancet 367 (2006), p. 44–51.

- In 1977–1978 there was a war, beginning on 8 March 1977, in Moba and lasting 80 days.
- In 1991 and 1993 looting occurred throughout the country. It was the beginning of the multi-party system.
- In 1996–1997 the war of the Alliance of the Liberation Forces (AFDL) took place. It overthrew the Mobutu regime that took refuge in Morocco.
- In 1998–2002 the DR Congo was invaded by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, resulting in the formation of several rebel movements.
- In 2004–2007 General Laurent Nkunda Batuare led a war in North and South Kivu.
- The years 2008–2009 saw the insurrection in the national army of the Tutsi military group, the CNDP (*Comité National pour la Défense du Peuple,* or, National committee for the Defence of the People).
- In 2012–2013 the rebel movement M23 went public with the claim that the agreements signed on 23 March 2010 between the government and the CNDP were not respected (Revue, 2015, p. 231).
- In 2016 there was a militia uprising in Kasai. Chief Kamuina Nsapu challenged the authority of the central government.
- In 2020 the ADF (Allied Democratic forces) enforced its movement in the Eastern part of the DR Congo.
- In June 2022, the DR Congo army had accused Kigali of having sent 500 of its soldiers to the Eastern part of the country. The government of DR Congo through the Ministry of Communication and Media condemned the participation of the Rwandan authorities supporting, financing and arming this rebellion.

It is noted that in DR Congo each period of a few years had its own version of war. To end up the cycle of violence in the Country, 13 agreements of peace have been done to solve peacefully the army conflicts. Unfortunately cycle of violence is still occurring.

3. The role of the Church in relation to the conflict

The ECC was founded on 19th March 1941. Nowadays, it comprises around 95 communities. Each community is autonomous with its own president, local churches and organisation. These communities are linked together under the umbrella of the ECC. A community wishing to become a member of the ECC must fulfil 17 requirements, such as believing in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, trusting in the Bible as the sole authority and accepting the ECC constitu-

tion.[5] With regard to the role played by the Church, the evangelical, educational and diaconal missions remain core priorities.

In the 1990s, the ECC had no specific department with the task of reflecting on socio-political issues in the country. The lack of such a department hampers Church influence in the socio-political sphere. Around 2018, the ECC set up a department to address socio-political issues. One other deficiency is the lack of an organised structure of the 95 communities within the ECC. Each deals with political issues and concerns in its own particular way. The Church is involved in charitable work at local level. It preaches peaceful co-existence, reconciliation, forgiveness and justice.

With the effectiveness of the Peace, Justice and Safeguarding of Creation Commission, the ECC began to get involved in public affairs. Ten years after the release of the United Nations Human Rights report on the massacre perpetrated in DR Congo by its Mapping report, the ECC had launched a national awareness campaign in October 2020, to demand justice for the victims of these crimes.

4. The evidence from the interviews

This section concerns interviews conducted in the attempt to understand the ongoing violence in Eastern DR Congo and the motivation of the main army group involved, the Allied Democratic forces (ADF). The ADF are responsible for such things as population displacement, rape, imposing taxes on the population for their own gain. Nowadays, it is clearly known that the M23 supported by Rwanda is perpetrating killing in the Eastern part of the Republic.

The interview included seven questions:

1. Are the ADF Congolese or foreigners?
They are a mixture of people from many countries: Uganda, DR Congo, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia. They are of mixed nationality.
2. Where are they located?
They are in the National Park of Virunga in the 'triangle'. They come from area around Babuba Kisiki, Banade Kahinama, Watalinga in Ruwenzori. According to many sources, the ADF has been operating for more than 32 years. People usually leave the Ruwenzori area to seek security in such place as Beni Ville and Kasindi because of the aggression of the ADF.

5 Joel Kuvuna Mbongi, The Kairos in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A prophetic Voice in a Context of Socio-Political Instability, PhD thesis at University of Kwazulu Natal 2019, p. 117–131.

3. What are the real motivation behind their massacres?
Understanding the motivation of the ADF is very difficult. Some refer to religious motives, others to the conquest of land. The ADF says that a portion of land belongs to them. They were furious about being disturbed by the national armed forces (FARDC) when they were living peacefully on their land.
4. Are they Christian, Muslim or members of any other religion?
It is difficult to say if they are Christian or Muslim or whatever. They have a mixture of beliefs. If they were Muslim, they would not steal pigs. They impose the people they kidnap to adhere to their ideology.
5. How many armed groups are competing around Beni?
Apart from the ADF, there are also the Mai-Mai militias, with different leaders within their groups. They are made of Congolese militia, who, according to the FARDC, serve the ADF.
6. Is there any collaboration between other army groups (if there are other army groups)?
Yes. The Mai-Mai is collaborating, for example, with the ADF. They have the same objective, which is land acquisition.
7. How do people defend themselves against threats from the armed groups?
The population should collaborate with the national army to mitigate the negative force. People sometimes try to defend themselves, although this method is unacceptable to the national authorities.[6] They also sometimes use witchcraft to protect themselves against being shot.

Massacres occur on a daily basis in Eastern DR Congo. People are forced to leave their villages, becoming homeless or refugees. Most young people in the Church are starting to organise themselves and seeking protection through traditional witchcraft or setting up defence groups to resist their opponents. Other religious groups claim to be able to solve this kind of insecurity. One movement has created defence groups. They even, sometimes, impose their ideas and practices on Church leaders as a way to defeat their enemies. For example, a group in the city of Beni in Eastern DR Congo, which belongs to a particular religious movement that believes in the ancestors instead of Jesus, forced the entire city to walk without shoes for three days – the recommendation received by their spirit. Anyone disobeying the order were beaten, even if they were priests or pastors. The challenge was enormous. Should Christians obey such rules? According to the testimony of many individuals, some Church leaders even agreed to wear *gris-gris*

6 Ericas Wisi, Licencie en communication aux organisations et journaliste national et international base à Beni. An interview on 15 January 2021.

amulets or accept witchcraft to protect themselves. Violence is still increasing in Eastern RD Congo. The Church seems powerless to eradicate violence. The question is how the Church should address such violence.

5. Theological reflection on violence

With regard to the current violence in Eastern DR Congo, how can the Church respond? Should it be neutral? How would neutrality appear or behave in the face of such aggression? The question is, how can the Church be neutral when it is challenged by issues concerning social justice? Is there any way for the Church to act prophetically? Acting prophetically requires an understanding of the *Kairos (the right time to act)* and engagement with the socioeconomics and politics of its time. A prophetic theology confronts the status quo, as well as the current Pharaohs and their empires.

When the Church is struggling for justice, it is not intentionally seeking confrontation, according to De Gruchy, even though this may often be the immediate, penultimate and necessary effect. Injustice and its perpetrators must be confronted with the claims of justice and truth, the demands of the Gospel.[7]

In resisting Nazism, Bonhoeffer warned the Church against transforming its services into a 'sort of idolatrous religion'. Issues of human rights, human dignity, justice and so forth should feature within its worship services.

There are three forms of theology: state theology, church theology and prophetic theology.

State theology is simply the theological justification of the status quo, including its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonises the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity. Church theology engages without proper analysis of circumstances. It simply follows the Christian tradition, including such things as reconciliation, peace, justice and non-violence, without any critical appraisal of details and without an appreciation of changing contexts. Reconciliation without justice and repentance cannot avoid being superficial. Gary Leonard[8] argues that justice might not be offered by the oppressors.

Finally, prophetic theology declares solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Christians are called upon to confront evil and, love their enemies.

7 De Gruchy, 1988. Nürnberger /Tooke, p. 167.

8 Gary S.D. Leonard (ed.), Kairos: The Moment of Truth, Pietermaritzburg: Ujamaa Centre 2011, p. 6–14.

Jesus and violence

Jesus never used violence, yet he was the most prominent revolutionary of his time. Even when he was being killed violently, he did not respond. Peter tried to resist violently in the Garden of Gethsemane, but Jesus rebuked him. Similarly, public theologians should demonstrate great interest in the contextuality of their theological task. They need to be attentive to the issues affecting society.[9]

Responding to the violence

In the context of the violence in DR Congo, if a Christian ever chooses violent resistance, it must be done in the manner that Bonhoeffer made his choice – as an exception to the rule, in the case of extreme human rights abuses after all other methods have been exhausted and many prayers have been offered, with a full willingness to accept the guilt and consequences.[10]

Referring to non-violent resistance, Martin Luther King Jr used Matthew 5:39 as bedrock for claiming that Jesus' resistance was non-violent. The word "non-violence" comes from the Sanskrit term ahimsa, and was brought to us by Gandhi at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Gandhi and Martin Luther King, non-violence does not mean passivity and resignation. Proponents of non-violence take into consideration all kinds of conflicts by seeking to resolve them peacefully. Resolving conflict does not only mean to end it up with any way. The way employed must also be just. Speaking to the English, Ghandi said:

> "Your big mistake is to believe that there is no relationship between the ends and the means. This error caused crimes to be committed even by people who were considered religious. (...) The means are like the seed and the end like the tree. The relationship is as inescapable between the end and the means as between the tree and the seed."[11]

Mahatma Gandhi was involved in non-violent action in South Africa and various social movements in the fight for India's independence. Both Gandhi and King's attitudes and writings are strongly influenced by their respective spiritual traditions. Gandhi used a strategy called *'satyagraha'* from *'satya'* (truth) and *'agrah'* (strength, insistence) which includes protests, boycotts, strikes, non-cooperation, usurpation of government functions and building parallel institu-

9 Eneida Jacobsen, Models of public theology, in: International Journal of Public Theology 6 (2012), p. 7–22, here: p. 18.

10 Michael G. Long (ed.), Resist! Christian Dissent for the 21st Century, New York: Orbis Books 2008, p. 15.

11 Francois Vaillant, la non-violence dans l'Evangile, les editions ouvriers, Paris 1991, p. 11.

tions. This strategy is based on 'respectful disobedience' to the oppressors and intends to be transparent and true.[12] Gandhi usually criticised passive resistance. In 1952, Nelson Mandela organised a non-violent civil boycott against unjust laws in South Africa, the largest ever seen in the country.[13]

According to Bayard Rustin, the use of violent technologies had theological implications, for it prevents human beings from experiencing how God was available in each person.[14]

A 1948 public lecture on civil disobedience exemplifies Rustin's Quaker theological reasoning. Rustin used Quaker theological categories to advocate civil disobedience as a moral response to rising U.S. militarism following the Second World War. Soon after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people considered the bomb a 'new factor in the stream of history.' But Rustin insisted that the atomic bomb 'is not new but is merely another listing in the encyclopaedia of force which began with the club and slingshot and which now includes biological agents and chemical warfare'.[15] The bomb raised a familiar moral question: will human beings continue to rely on and justify the use of violence? Rustin feared the answer was yes, in part because scientific achievement obscured moral decay.[16]

Rustin denied that violence or preparing for violence could ever sow the seeds of peace. Rather, a pernicious kind of causality escalated. Rustin argued that increasing stores of weapons, and, thus, the potential for violence, only augmented people's fears.[17]

Instead, civil disobedience is undertaken with the hope that the community can improve, and with faith in the capacity for positive change.

Before a person undertakes civil disobedience, he or she should ask him/herself a series of questions, namely: 'Are the people I am asking to rebel keenly conscious of a flagrant wrong being perpetrated against them? Or am I merely inciting their passions?' Action should be thoughtfully undertaken, and each person should participate only with good cause. A person should envisage:

12 Gilberto Carvalho De Oliveira, Pacifist Approaches to Conflict Resolution: An Overview of the Principled Pacifism, in: Janus.Net: e-Journal of International Relations 8 (2017), p. 23–43, here: 32–34.

13 Elizabeth D. Boepple, Art. Mandela, Nelson (1918–2013). Global Studies. Encyclopaedic Dictionary. Value Inquiry Book Series 276, Amsterdam/New York 2014, p. 325–327.

14 Sarah Azaransky, "That Spark of God in Each of Us": Bayard Rustin's Moral Vision, Union Theological Seminary.

15 Bayard Rustin, 'In apprehension how like a God!', William Penn lecture. Young Friends movement, Philadelphia 1948, p. 3.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. p. 4.

What is likely to be the effect of the resistance? Will the new state be worse than it was before the resistance? As opportunities for mass non-violent action and significant social change dissipated in the United States. Rustin believed there was potential for non-violence to bring democratic revolution to West Africa, which was essential to political and economic independence.

The Bible is a historical record encompassing socio-economic, religious and political affairs that tell of the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel. The Bible first gives us an image of contestation and liberation in the primary social relationship of man and woman in Genesis 1. As the foundation of all society, it manifests all the characteristics of any inter-human relationship. This is inclusive of political relations. The Bible may also assist in justifying or confronting the established order.[18] Genesis further assigns to humanity the task of caretaker or 'steward' of the creation God calls 'good'. From a biblical perspective, all people are equal in God's image. The Bible also expresses special concern about the most vulnerable and powerless members of the human family. Specific biblical laws provide for the liberation of prisoners and the return of land to those, who may have lost it. In other words, the Bible outlines specific means to redress wrongs so that the disadvantaged members of society have an opportunity to regain their means of self-support and self-sufficiency. The role of the Bible in African politics, however, is ambiguous. As Carlos Mesters has reminded us, it can be a force for liberation or a force for oppression.

6. Individual findings, goals, possible options and obstacles, and steps needed

The Christian Bible should serve as an instrument that liberates people in a holistic sense that includes the economic, political and spiritual dimension. However, the risk associated with this is that the same instrument is used to legalise discrimination, xenophobia, and all kinds of violence. The Church seems to have established a dichotomy between theology and societal realities by concentrating primarily on evangelising people and getting them to attend Sunday services, while neglecting those, who are most disadvantaged and suffering.[19] Some scholars see the concept of prophetic politics as an intrusion of religion into

18 Moji Ruele, Contextual Theological Reading of the Bible with Indigenous communities: The Case of the Basarwa/San in Botswana Masiiwa, in: Regies Gunda / Joachim Kugler (eds.), The Bible and politics in Africa, University of Bamberg Press 2012, p. 178–185.

19 Mbengu D. Nyiawung, The prophetic witness of the church as an appropriate mode of public discourse in African societies, in: Hervormde Teologiese Studies 66 (2010), p. 1.

politics. According to Jan Hanska[20], combining notions of God's will with rational political guidelines, is one of the greatest challenges of prophetic politics.

7. Recommendations

The researcher would like to make the following recommendations to the Church and the UEM.

7.1 To the Church

- The Church must understand human dignity and its key role for a peaceful world.
- The Church must affirm the image of God in every person.
- The Church must be a gracious and inclusive communities, in which individuals are accepted as being created in the image of God, welcomed as sisters and brothers in Christ, and challenged to grow, in the power of the Holy Spirit, more fully into the divine likeness.
- The Church must work for the visible unity of the Church with penitence and vigour, knowing that the divisions between Christians often reflect and exacerbate the brokenness of the human community.[21]
- The Church must be and act as, a prophetic Church, and finding a peaceful way to do it.
- The Church in the DR Congo must accept the cost of a prophetic ministry or calling. It is the case of Rev Dr EKOFO who was persecuted for the truth.
- The prophetic voice should not be framed according to the budget lines of the recipients. We really need financial support to exercise that ministry. But the search for financial aid can also be a brake on a true and free expression. The ECC must have a clear and personal vision of its prophetic voice.
- The ECC must avoid having the CENCO (National Episcopal Conference of Congo, from Catholic) as a support system for its socio-political positions. His prophetic action must be centered on his own prophetic vision.
- Other challenges and recommendation to the ECC is to work on a strong structured prophetic voice of the Church to avoid a personal positioning of the leader which is institutionalized. In this way, the church will avoid change of the prophetic regime in any change of Church leader.

20 Jan Hanska, Prophetic Politics – Leadership Based on the Stories of a Golden. Past and a Glorious Future, in: Perspectives 17/2 (2009), p. 99.

21 World Council of Churches, Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology. A Faith and Order Study Document, Geneva 2006, p. 22.

– The ECC must work hard for a socio-political education of its members. Many Christians do not know that they are responsible for public affairs.
– The ECC must also work to denounce the political game of the international community on its role in the insecurity in the Eastern part of the DR Congo. The real war of the DR Congo is the looting of its wealth even by those who seem to secure us and come to our aid.

Addressing the true position of the Church with respect to social justice and engaging in the prophetic role, the Church in DR Congo must seek to expose the causes of the social, political, economic and spiritual problems.

Quoting Hoffmeyer: 'According to the principle of inertia, trying to be politically neutral equates to support for the existing order. If one is not doing something to change the way things are, one lets them continue the same way.'[22]

Sometimes, the weakness of the Church is to gather together many communities that are not compelled to have the same vision of prophetic mission.

7.2 To the UEM

The UEM works with four historical models and five figures of Missio Dei. The UEM has the responsibility to embrace prophetic theology with churches that are engaged in a similar way.

The UEM should strengthen the JPIC department in order to address, and have a greater impact on, injustice. However, the UEM should identify a way to collaborate with commitment. Sometimes church structures become a threat to real action on the ground. Some independent movements have greater impacts and are, somehow, more useful when dealing, for instance, with injustice or discrimination.

The UEM has responsibility to encourage individual initiative working on peace building. Many have a specific calling but don't belong to a church structure. The UEM can encourage such initiatives in order to impact the society.

8. Conclusion

The situation of violence in Eastern DR Congo is challenging. The DR Congo Protestant Church has responsibility to act prophetically to mitigate the violence. Violence cannot be solved by violence. However, it must be severely censured. The neutrality of the church must be demonstrated in the manner, in which it sides with the oppressed people.

22 John F. Hoffmeyer, Church and Politics, in: Dialogue: A Journal of Theology 52 (2013), p. 169.

The ECC has a great responsibility in this time of the socio-political and security crisis. The Church must also work to denounce what we named the political game of the international community on its role in the insecurity in the Eastern part of the DR Congo. True war in the DR Congo is the looting of raw material.

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FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION AND THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

A Long Way towards Peace

David Lase[1]

Abstract

The birth of the Church is the manifestation of the reconciliation process. The Church has, therefore, a calling to continue to echo reconciliation as part of its identity. To realise reconciliation as an identity, requires a comprehensive understanding of the concept of reconciliation, including the terms and conditions needed to make it happen. One of these is forgiveness. However, forgiveness cannot stand alone. There are other matters that have to be fulfilled before reconciliation can be realised. This paper attempts to present the correlation between the concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation as an identity of the Church as a means of building peace. The background of this paper is the local context of Indonesia, which is then developed in a global context and is general in nature.
Keywords: *reconciliation, forgiveness, violence, conflict, church identity, peace*

1. Introduction

Conflict has become a part of daily human life. If we look back, the history of conflict emerged along with the events of the creation of the world. The phrase, 'the earth has not been formed and is still an empty, pitch-black covered ocean', became an illustration of the existing chaotic situation. John C.L. Gibson explained the phrase *'tohu wa bohu'* in the text of Genesis 1:1 with, '(Where) the earth (was later to be, there) was chaos and confusion' – or better: '(what was later to be called) the earth was (as yet) desolation and disorder'.[2] Gibson's opinion shows that the reality of conflict has become a kind of shadow of life itself.

1 David Lase passed away on 11 December 2021.
2 John C. L Gibson, Genesis. 2 vols, Daily study Bible-Old Testament, Edinburgh/Philadelphia: Saint Andrew Press/Westminster Press 1981, p. 31–32.

In a global context, the events of the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Iraq-Iran war, the war in the former Yugoslavia, the Tiananmen tragedy, the collapse of the WTC Twin Towers in 9/11, the civil war in Rwanda and the atrocities of ISIS have confirmed that violence and conflict have become a 'culture' for mankind. In our local context, Indonesia also shows the face of violence and conflict. We can trace this back to the events of war: both the pre-independence and post-independence war; violence during the Old Order that ended with the tragic killing of people labelled as members of the Communist Party in Indonesia (PKI); the New Order era with various accounts of human rights violations in Aceh, East Timor and Papua as well as cases that were never resolved, such as the 1998 riots, conflicts between community groups in various regions and violence against minority groups.

Reconciliation is difficult realise for several reasons. Firstly, the perpetrators of violence do not admit their actions, even though the facts point to the truth. Secondly, the government has demonstrated no political will to resolve the matter.[3] As a result, violence continues to breed violence.[4] We find contrasting circumstances in South Africa. To prevent retaliation against white people, the South African government deliberately devised the largest and most complex post-conflict resurrection design in the peace-making process, by establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[5] Through this TRC, reconciliation was created in a country that had been devastated by oppressive apartheid politics.

2. Reconciliation: The complexity of a narrative

Reconciliation can be understood in many ways. The most concise, traditional way of describing it is 'the resurrection of the true relationship'[6]. According to Daniel Philpott, reconciliation is a concept of justice that involves the resurrection of true relationship, which is inspired by mercy, and results in a true relationship condition, which has been marked by peace.[7] Reconciliation can be interpreted as an effort to fully restore everything that has been damaged. In line with Philpott, Birgit Bräuchler defines reconciliation as:

3 Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, Rekonsiliasi: upaya memecah spiral kekerasan dalam masyaraka, Maumere: Penerbit Ledalero 2005, p. viii.
4 Müller-Fahrenholz, Rekonsiliasi, p. viii.
5 Russell Daye, Political forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa, Maryknoll/NY: Orbis Books 2011, p. 4.
6 Daniel Philpott, Reconciliation: An Ethic for Peacebuilding, in: Daniel Philpott et al. (ed.), Strategies of Peace, Oxford: University Press 2010, p. 95.
7 Philpott, Reconciliation, p. 98.

> '… a multidimensional process that takes place on different levels: interpersonal, between individuals and communities, among communities, between communities and the state, among states, and, what is so far hardly considered in the relevant literature, between the human and non-human world that share a common cosmology.'8

John W. de Gruchy mentioned that reconciliation is about the resurrection of justice, whether it has correlation with our justification by God, the rejuvenation of interpersonal relationships, or with community transformation.[9] In his view, reconciliation is an instrument of struggle and a way to overcome the past.[10] It is, therefore, a gradual process, carried out with the aim of achieving complete change in the community. Reconciliation is a concrete response to various incidents of violence and conflict in specific situations and contexts. Despite such a concrete response to such incidents, reconciliation is not a single entity. It has a broad spectrum, which means that the transformation, transition and rebuilding of society are needed. Reconciliation is not understood as something abstract, but as a concrete matter, since a range of issues must be seriously considered, such as legal process for the perpetrators of crimes, assistance for survivors and the preparation of various structures and processes that are new to society.[11]

Reconciliation efforts have social and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions aim to restore a conflict situation up to the stage of realising concrete social reconciliation.[12] The spiritual dimension relates to the Christian understanding of principles of reconciliation.[13] Christoph Schwöbel emphasises this dimension: 'There is no doubt that the idea of reconciliation, as used in political and societal discourse, is rooted in the language of Christian proclamations.'[14] The combination of these dimensions makes reconciliation a holistic movement that covers all areas of human life: political, social, interpersonal and personal.

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8 Birgit Bräuchler, Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace, London/New York Routledge 2009, p. 4.

9 John W. de Gruchy, Reconciliation, Minneapolis: Fortress 2002, p. 1-2.

10 John W. de Gruchy, The dialectic of reconciliation, in: Gregory Baum, The Reconciliation of Peoples, Geneva: WCC 1997, p. 16-29, here: 17-28.

11 Robert J. Schreiter, The ministry of reconciliation: Spirituality & strategies, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books 1998, p. 12.

12 Schreiter, Ministry, p. 4.

13 Ibid.

14 Christoph Schwöbel, Reconciliation: From biblical observation to dogmatic reconstruction, in: Colin E. Gunton (ed.), The theology of reconciliation, London/New York: T & T Clarks 2003, p. 14.

3. Forgiveness: A concrete step towards reconciliation

The understanding of reconciliation as the resurrection of the wounds of the past to create a better future can be realised in four ways. These are healing, truth-telling, pursuit of justice and forgiveness.[15]

Firstly, healing. Healing actions are remediation for memory, remediation for victims and remediation for perpetrators.[16] Memory healing is a precautionary step, so that the cycle of violence does not keep repeating. Realising this kind of healing, requires a rearrangement of the past narrative.[17] Healing for victims shall be carried out in an effort to restore the humanity, theological understanding, dignity, relations and rights that have been damaged. Meanwhile, healing for perpetrators includes the confession of guilt, pursuit of forgiveness and acceptance of punishment for misdemeanours.[18] Secondly, truth-telling. The practice of truth-telling involves providing testimony with regard to what actually happened in the past and collective efforts to reconstruct a public truth.[19] Thirdly, the pursuit of justice.[20] From the perspective of justice, at least three forms of justice have to be realised: (1) punitive justice, that emphasises confession of guilt by perpetrators; (2) restorative justice directly related to the healing of victims and with actions of restitution and reparation that open up fair community; (3) structural justice, which involves social structures changing through political processes as a means of reducing or changing the economic, political and social structures that perpetuate injustice in society.[21] Fourthly, forgiveness.[22] Forgiveness is not easy. In fact, Vladimir Jankélévitch calls forgiveness a gesture or action that is unknown in the world of psychology.[23] According to him, forgiveness must always involve acceptance and a real relationship with the other person behind the wrongdo-

15 Robert J. Schreiter, The Emergence of Reconciliation as a Paradigm of Mission, in: Robert J. Schreiter / Knud Jorgensen (eds.), Mission as ministry of reconciliation (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 16), Oxford: Regnum Books International 2013, p. 19-20.

16 Schreiter, Emergence, p. 19.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Schreiter, Emergence, p. 20.

21 Schreiter, Emergence, p. 20. Charles Villa-Vicencio enriched the concept of restorative justice by adding several terms, such as: deterrent justice, rehabilitative justice and compensatory justice. In the end, all of the above concepts of justice function as an affirmation of the dignity of all human beings (Villa-Vicencio, Charles / Verwoerd, Wilhelm: Looking back, reaching forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, Cape Town/London/New York: University of Cape Town Press/Zed Books/St. Martin's Press 2000, p. 73).

22 Schreiter, Emergence, p. 20.

23 Vladimir Jankélévitch, Forgiveness, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005, p. 1.

ing.[24] In other words, forgiveness must involve two parties: the 'perpetrator', who confesses his/her actions, and the 'victim', who is willing to forgive. Both parties can be transformed by this encounter. Healing that opens up an opportunity for better collaboration between parties that had previously been fighting each other. More than using confrontational words or gestures, forgiveness constitutes a process of encounter and healing, which reveals genuinely new choices for the future and relieves the future from haunting worries from the past.[25]

It is at this point that difficulties can arise. The first difficulty is that perpetrators are often not prepared to admit their actions. And to be able to forgive, victims must have sufficient courage to return to the memory of the crime that has happened. This is not easy, because by remembering the pain of what happened, it is as if they are experiencing that violence again. Honest memory, according to Volf, is an important element for the creation of self-healing.[26] In other words, forgiveness, which includes honest remembrance, is also a self-healing process. The same thing was also stated by Desmond M. Tutu. Tutu wrote that in order to forgive, one does not forget, but remembers, so that the abomination that has happened does not happen again.[27] For him, forgiveness is an act of indifference over the right to avenge a perpetrator; however, this indifference actually makes the victim free.[28] He also explained that even though it was difficult and risky, forgiveness creates hope for a better future. It is no exaggeration to call our forgiveness a 'practice' of spirituality. This is confirmed by E. Gregory Jones, who states that forgiveness is a lifestyle related to God. Jones wrote that:

> '… forgiveness is at once an expression of commitment to a way of life, a life of holiness of the cross in which people throw away their "old" selves and learn to live in communion with God and with one another, and a means of seeking reconciliation in the midst of certain sins, for example, specific examples of destruction.'[29]

From the description above, we get an idea that forgiveness is a critical point for the creation of reconciliation. Forgiveness is a complex action, which cannot stand alone. However, forgiveness can act as a bridge to span the chasm of violence and conflict that allows perpetrators and victims alike to experience resurrection.

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24 Jankélévitch, Forgiveness, p. xxi.
25 Müller-Fahrenholz, Rekonsiliasi, p. 17.
26 Miroslav Volf, The End of Memory: Remembering rightly in a violent Word, Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans 2006, p. 71.
27 Desmond M. Tutu, No future without forgiveness, New York: Doubleday 1999, p. 271.
28 Tutu, Future, p. 272.
29 L. Gregory Jones, Embodying forgiveness, Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans 1995, p. 5.

4. The Church of peace: Utopian or realistic?

What about the Church? The Church is also a fertile field for seeds of conflict to be sown. Conflict thrives in many church denominations in Indonesia. On a simple practical level, we rarely, if ever, define the Church by using the word 'peace'. Alan Kreider, Eleanor Kreider, and Paulus Widjaja mention that, 'we may feel peaceful when we go to church, but most of us probably wouldn't think of describing our church as being a "culture of peace"'.[30] It is ironic that the Church, which should be the perpetrator and proclaimer of reconciliation, is drowning in the shackles of various forms of conflict. Therefore, at this time, a breakthrough of thought is required to enable the Church to avoid this irony. We, therefore, propose the following:

Firstly, the Church must have the courage to change its perspective of conflict. The Church's general perspective of conflict includes the idea that conflict is negative; conflict is a sign of failure; conflict is a disgrace, so it must be covered up. In short, the Church has employed a range of strategies to negate the reality of conflict. The impact of such negation is to forget, and be indifferent to, conflict, which has a range of impacts, since it gives the impression that negative assumptions about conflict leads the Church to take action against reality. This action also entails the rejection of others. On the other hand, where the Church embraces conflict, this means that the Church also embraces 'the other', because, in the conflict, there are 'faces of self' as well as 'faces of others'. For this reason, the Church must collectively change its perspective of conflict, through: (1) realising the importance of building awareness and acknowledgment of conflict; (2) recognising that accepting conflict will foster a positive response to conflict; (3) ensuring that a positive response to conflict is the characteristic of the Church. Reconciliation is born out of the awareness and acceptance of the conflict reality in a positive way.

Secondly, make reconciliation part of the identity of the Church. The above criticisms of Kreider and Widjaja make us aware of the missing essence of the Church, namely the awareness that it was born because of the reconciliation of God with human beings through Jesus Christ. Since the Church is the fruit of reconciliation, it must be the doer and herald of reconciliation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18–19). This is based on three things: (1) reconciliation is God's work[31]; (2) the Church is the fruit of God's act of reconciliation with human beings, and (3) human beings are ambassadors of peace.[32] In other words, reconciliation has,

30 Kreider et al., Culture of Peace, p. 9.
31 Schreiter, Emergence, p. 15.
32 Ibid.

in fact, been the character of Christianity since the very beginning. Reconciliation is born out of the awareness and acceptance of conflict reality in a positive way. These characteristics must be part of the identity and construction of the Church. We know that the identity construction of the Church always has missiological implications. Therefore, reconciliation must become the missionary identity of the Church, which is, thereby called to embody and practise reconciliation in all aspects of its life.

Thirdly, according to Naim Stifan Atteek, the Church has a two-dimensional ministry, namely: performing its prophetic role and acting as peacemaker in fighting for justice, peace and reconciliation for all people experiencing conflict.[33] Its biblical and theological basis has three components, namely: the sustainable action and involvement of God in history, God's love for the world and God's concern for justice, mercy and peace in the world.[34]

The Church must, therefore, proclaim the concept of God, which is universal and inclusive. It is not only for Christians, but also for followers of other religions.[35] By emphasising a spirit that does not demean, or act in a superior way toward, anyone, as well as promoting justice and peace, the Church embraces Christian truth and calls people to repentance and to change their mentality of warring with each other.[36] The strategy offered by Ateek for churches existing in the midst of conflict situations in the context of the state and society, is for them to act together, adopt these two imperatives and establish a concrete organisation as a centre for peace.[37] For Ateek, the challenge for the churches is their internal disunity as well as the politicisation of authorities that exploit them, thereby exacerbating local and national conflicts.[38] The Church must embody and practice what is at the heart of the Christian faith: the cross and resurrection of Christ to build peace and reconciliation with God and others.[39] The power of the cross enables the Church to overcome physical and psychological weaknesses, as well as move beyond its bitterness and hostility in the midst of conflict, so that the Church can act as a servant, an agent, as well as an instrument of peace and reconciliation for Christ.[40] The National Council of Churches of Christ, as quoted by Ateek, confirms that through the sacrament of Holy Communion, the

33 Ateek, Naim Stifan: Justice and only justice: Palestinian theology of liberation, New York: Orbis Books 1990, p. 151-152.
34 Ateek, Justice, p. 153.
35 Ibid.
36 Ateek, Justice, p. 154.
37 Ateek, Justice, p. 155.
38 Ateek, Justice, p. 154-161.
39 Ateek, Justice, p. 161.
40 Ibid.

Incarnation of Christ is revealed in the community of the Body of Christ and, furthermore, in ministry in the world.[41]

Based on the above perspective, churches, as instruments of peace and reconciliation, can also be more effective and have a wider reach by joining themselves in a larger community with the aim of spreading this idea in a more global context. For example, the United Evangelical Mission – the Protestant communion of Churches in Asia, Africa and Germany – which, since 1829, has been a pioneer of evangelisation in many parts of the word. The role and function of an evangelical mission like this will be very helpful in reappraising ideas concerning reconciliation and church identity and propagating them more quickly. The UEM can be a source of collective learning about the evangelism movement that transcends boundaries of place, time and space. The UEM can encourage member Churches to continue to reconcile with each other in all areas of the life of member Churches. So that everyone in the Church becomes a peacemaker and lives in peace. Member Churches are, therefore, invited to avoid conflict and learn to live in harmony. Secondly, the UEM, as an evangelical mission, can be a forum to promote the values of justice and the struggle for church integrity through the reconciliation movement in member Churches. Dissension in the past, grudges and schism can be eliminated through the promotion of justice and joint integrity. The UEM can be a driving force for the call to live together without prejudice. It is undeniable that many churches are still nursing old wounds. But through reconciliation, the UEM member Churches are called to no longer inhabit the wounds and traumas of the past and begin to look to the future with better possibilities and opportunities. Finally, the UEM can organise activities involving themes of reconciliation, peace and church identity, which can be expected to be developed according to local conditions in each member Church. The future we are looking forward to is a future that should be filled with peace and justice together with all human beings. That is our identity.

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41 Ateek, Justice, p. 162.

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YES, THEY ARE DIFFERENT!

Redefining Christian Faith to Resist Exclusion and Discrimination

Novel Matindas[1]

1. Introduction

Across its many islands, Indonesia consists of distinct ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, with Javanese as the largest and dominant race group in the country.[2] As a unitary state and nation, Indonesia has developed a shared identity, defined by a national language. Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* ('Unity in Diversity', literally: 'diverse, yet one'), articulates the diversity that shapes the country.

The Province of Papua and Province of West Papua are the easternmost provinces of Indonesian. At least 250 diverse ethnic groups are estimated to live here.[3] Most people living in Papua[4] (formerly known as Irian Barat and Irian Jaya) are Christian. The indigenous people of Papua are Melanesians, considered to be racially distinct from the rest of Indonesia, who are Malay.[5]

In general, the people of Papua are divided into two major race groups: the *Orang gunung* (mountain people) and *Orang Pantai* (coastal communities). Most indigenous Papuans live in remote and highland areas. Christianity is the dominant faith of indigenous Papuans in rural areas due to the greater concentration of the Church's mission in these areas.

1 Novel Matindas passed away on 27 March 2022.

2 According to the 2010 statistic report, the percentage of Javanese people is 40.2% of the total population in Indonesia (Akhsan Na'im / Hendry Syaputra, Kewarganegaraan, Suku Bangsa, Agama, dan Bahasa Sehari-hari Penduduk Indonesia: Hasil Sensus Penduduk 2010, Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik 2011, p. 8).

3 Na'im/Syaputra Kewarganegaraan, p. 26–27.

4 Papua here refers to both provinces.

5 Jacques Bertrand, Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2004, p. 147.

2. Human rights violations and discrimination

Since the disputed decision to join Indonesia in the 'Act of Free Choice' in 1969, the Indonesian government has been struggling to maintain security and stability in Papua by sending large numbers of military troops to the area.[6] However, human rights organisations – domestic and international – accuse these military operations of being responsible for acts of torture, unlawful killing, arbitrary arrest and other human rights violations.

Papuans living in areas, in which military operations have been conducted, have horrific stories to tell about the abuses they have suffered. They describe, for example, how they watched their houses burning down, their gardens and source of livelihoods being destroyed. They give accounts of how they watched their friends, acquaintances and family members being intimidated, tortured and killed during military operations[7].

While there are no precise numbers of unlawful killings by security forces in Papua during the New Order era, Komnas HAM (Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights) has estimated that, between 1963 and 1998, around 10,000 people were unlawfully killed here during military operations. These killings took place not only during supposed counter-insurgency operations, but also in response to other alleged threats to national security, such as peaceful political protests.[8]

Amnesty International recorded 69 cases of suspected unlawful killings by security forces in Papua between January 2010 and February 2018, with a total of 95 victims of violence. In 34 cases, the alleged perpetrators were members of police forces; in 23 cases, the alleged perpetrators were members of the military; and in a further 11 cases, members of both security forces were allegedly involved. One more case also involved the municipal police (*Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja, or Satpol PP*), a body that is part of local government and tasked to enforce local regulations. Most victims, 85 of them, were ethnic Papuans[9].

As if they were not satisfied with this, violence against Papuans continued. Between the 15th and 18th August 2019, Papuan students in the cities of Malang, Surabaya and Semarang were victims of racist persecution. Several people from

6 Catherine Scott / Neles Tebay, The West Papua conflict and its consequences for the Island of New Guinea: Root causes and the campaign for Papua, land of peace, in: The Round Table 94/382 (2005), p. 601–603.

7 Franciscans International et. Al., "Human Rights in Papua 2011/2012" [Available at https://www.tapol.org/news-and-reports/reports/human-rights-papua-20112012].

8 Amnesty International Indonesia, "Don't Bother, Just Let Him Die": Killing with Impunity in Papua, Jakarta: Amnesty International Indonesia 2018, p. 18.

9 Amnesty International Indonesia, Killing, p. 14.

nationalist and Islamic organisations attacked a dormitory of Papuan students, accusing them of throwing the Indonesian national flag into a sewer before Indonesia's Independence Day celebrations. They called the students monkeys, dogs, animals and pigs. Instead of dispersing the crowd attacking the students, police surrounded the dormitory, demanding that the Papuan students turn themselves in.[10]

This racist incident sparked widespread protests in many places in Papua and West Papua. At least 284 civilians were known to be injured. The actual number could be higher, since many West Papuans were reported to be avoiding going to hospital. Security forces surrounded hospitals after each incident, deterring many West Papuans, traumatised and afraid of reprisals, from seeking treatment. Three shooting fatalities in Deiyai on 28th August could have been prevented if the victims had been able to obtain life-saving medical help. Fourteen patients in Deiyai and another four in Wamena were taken into police custody, while still being treated in hospital, further confirming the fears of West Papuans.[11]

Racially based discrimination (racism) of Papuan people in Indonesia, is common. This racism is deeply rooted in the culture and history of Indonesia. It can be violent, but it can sometimes be more subtle. Testimony has been provided by many Papuans, who have experienced such racism when working, studying or travelling on Java Island. Meanwhile, over many years, the Indonesian government discriminated against indigenous Papuans in their development programmes.[12] It was only after the introduction of the special autonomy law (*UU No. 21/2001 tentang Otonomi Khusus*), in 2001, that the government paid more attention to development in Papua. However, racial discrimination has not yet ended.[13]

10 See Elvira Rumkabu "Betapa Sulitnya Menjadi Papua" (2019), and The Jakarta Post (2019) "Riots flare in Manokwari after 'racist' attack on Papuan students in Surabaya".

11 Koman, Veronica: The 2019 West Papua Uprising. Tapol (2020) [Available at https://www.tapol.org/sites/default/files/The%202019%20West%20Papua%20Uprising.pdf], p. 7-8.

12 In a discussion with Prof. Emil Salim, Indonesian's prominent economist and former minister during President Soeharto's time, he explained that the decision to overlook the development in Papua on Soeharto's national development plan at that time was intentional. Apart from the consideration of urgency – it was more important to boost infrastructural development in Java, Kalimantan and Sumatera Island – security was also the principal element in the decision to exclude Papua (Cf. Jochen Motte, Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Inclusive Communities and the Churches, in: Jochen Motte / Theodor Rathgeber (eds.), Inclusive Communities and the Churches, Solingen: Foedus Verlag 2016, p. 21–22).

13 On 5 February 2021, the Papua Church Council (*Dewan Gereja Papua*) released a "Pastoral Statement" titled: Papua People viewed as Monkeys in the Sabang Merauke Indonesian National Park. This Pastoral Statement regrets the current human rights situation in the land of Papua and offers "a peaceful solution to 60 years of racist conflict, criminalization and militarism in the Land of Papua".

The next question would be: how can we, as the community of believers, play a role in overcoming violence and racism? Is it our call to prevent racism? If so, on what basis should we build our missional action? To answer these questions, I will try to develop a theological basis and suggest some practical guidance in the following sections.

I will use the definition of racism proposed by Berman and Paradies (2008), who define racism as that, which maintains or exacerbates inequality of opportunity among ethno-racial groups. Existing definitions of racism focus on a mix of prejudice, power, ideology, stereotypes, domination, disparities and/or unequal treatment.[14] Racism can be expressed through stereotypes (racist beliefs), prejudice (racist emotions/affect) or discrimination (racist behaviour and practices). Racism is one manifestation of the broader phenomenon of oppression, which also includes sexism, ageism and classism.[15]

3. A theological foundation: Towards a true relationship

The Church is called by God to be the 'salt' and 'light' of the Earth. It is, therefore, necessary for the Church to become involved in advocacy against racial discrimination and uphold human rights.

Nonetheless, the relation between the Church and human rights is ambiguous. The history of Christianity shows that the Church, in some contexts, has been capable of supporting human rights values but, in others, of acting against them. The Church has been victim of human rights violations for centuries, as testified by most of the marginalised groups within the community of faith. The historical journey of Christianity testifies that the Church has a long tradition of theological engagement with, and defence of, human rights norms. Christian traditions keep faith with human rights. On the other hand, however, the Church has also acted as perpetrator, participating in the discrimination of, and performing acts of violence against, the marginalised.

This is true, because a Christian, as a human being, is sinful, dependent on God's grace to act as witness to God's redemptive works in this world. I will, therefore, not try to develop a theological approach that conceptualises human rights in terms of universal values. Instead, I will outline a constructivist perspective that seeks to recontextualise Christian theology within a broader frame of reference, thereby enabling it to address its limitations.

14 Gabrielle Berman / Yin Paradies, Racism, disadvantage and multiculturalism: Towards effective anti-racist praxis, in: Ethnic and Racial Studies 33 (2008), p. 228.
15 Loc. Cit., p. 217.

a) Human as a relational being

A human being is differentiated from other creatures in his/her uniqueness as the image-bearer of God. This differentiation is a structure of the human being as a corporate person. Ray Anderson called this structure 'co-humanity', the material content of the principle of differentiation. In his fundamental existence, the 'human exists with regard to the other'.[16] According to Anderson, the actual form of humanity, in its original form, is co-humanity, from which all of our knowledge of the human being is derived.[17]

This means that, as human beings, we cannot live alone, isolated from other human beings. Our humanity is determined by our social relationships with other human beings. This is how we become Christian. A Christian person is a social self, a relational self, a self who exists in being-in-relation with other selves. We need the other to determine our identity, just as the other needs us. This reciprocal existence does not dissolve the individual into a corporate being, but results in a determination of humanity in its *singularity* as well as its plurality. The self needs the other in determining its singularity and vice versa.

However, this affirmation is not sufficient to solve the problem I raised above, since the relationship with *the other* also creates conflict among human beings. The *otherness* of the other (the singularity of the other person), as the precondition for relationship, is also the source of conflicts among human beings. Since the self is distinct from the other selves in relationship, this, thereby, generates *diversity* among human beings. Human diversity, for example, differences of skin colour, race, culture, faith, ideology etc., have been used as the condition of *exclusion*. The self, in relationship with the other, has always had a destructive potency to maintain *exclusiveness*, which leads to the violent exclusion of the other selves.

Redeveloping the concept of the Christian person also has to do with the personal language in the Trinity. Not in the sense of imitating the Trinitarian God as our projected imagination – although the human being is created in the image of God – but because this has been made possible in virtue of God's self-disclosure to humanity as the Trinitarian God in the person of Christ and *via* the works of the Spirit. Colin Gunton says, 'all being, meaning and truth is, even as created and distinct from God, in some way marked by its relatedness to its creator'.[18] In God, we look to the pattern of being together with the other, a rela-

16 Ray S. Anderson, On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology, Grand Rapids/MI: Eerdmans 1982, p. 44.

17 Loc. Cit., p. 45.

18 Collin Gunton, The One, the Three and the Many: God Creation and the Culture of Modernity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 167.

tionship built on the concept of *perichoresis*, according to which the three persons of the Trinity exist only in reciprocal eternal relatedness. The three divine persons do not merely (co-)exist, but dynamically constitute each other's being. In the Trinity, the *otherness* of each divine person is not dissolved but brings concrete distinction in the dynamic relatedness of Father, Son and Spirit.[19] This distinction marks the a-asymmetry in God's eternal communion. This means that each of the three divine persons in the Godhead has its own singularity.

b) Embracing the other without dissolving each other

The true relationship requires the embracing of the other. Just as Christ, who has 'emptied himself and died on the Cross' (Philippians 2:7–8) to embrace fallen humanity, so must we embrace the other. Whereas the *will* to embrace the other is unconditional, the embrace itself is not. Embracing others does not mean dissolving one's self-identity with the other or being self-enclosed and, thereby, excluding the other. The difference in personal expression to embrace the other is justified by the particularity of a person.

Embracing the other in his/her otherness is not always easy. There are reasons for our unwillingness to embrace the other. Firstly, we may be afraid of losing our identity, especially of being overwhelmed by others and their ways. Secondly, we may fear for our safety. Thirdly, we may be aware of old enmities that make us hesitate about living with the other. We know that old wounds can lead to new injuries, so why should we want to embrace the other? The reason to embrace the other is that living with the other in peace is an expression of our God-given humanity.

Drawing on the parable of the Prodigal Son, Miroslav Volf (1996) proposes four structural elements of an *embrace*: opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms and opening them again. Act one, *opening the arms*, is a gesture of the body reaching for the other, a code of *desire* for the other: a sign that I have *created space* in myself for the other to come in. I have made a movement out of myself in order to enter the space created by the other. Opening the arms suggests *fissure* in the self and a gesture of conditional invitation for the other to come in. Act two, *waiting*, is the work of the desiring self on itself for the sake of the integrity of the other. In waiting, the self considers the freedom of the other, who may not want to be embraced but be left alone, because of a painful memory that once, what started as an embrace, ended in rape. Act three, *closing the arms*, is the goal of embrace, a reciprocal action between the embracing self and the embraced other, a free act of mutual giving and receiving. In an embrace, the

19 Loc. Cit., p. 164–165.

identity of the self is both preserved and transformed; the *alterity* (otherness) of the other is affirmed as alterity and simultaneously partly received into the ever-changing identity of the self. Act four, *opening the arms again*, is the act of letting the other go, underlining that, while the other may be inscribed into the self, the alterity of the other may not be neutralised by merging both selves into an undifferentiated 'we'. The other must be let go to allow that alterity to be preserved; the self must take itself back into itself, so that its own identity, enriched by the trace left by the other's presence, may be preserved.[20]

These four acts of embrace, however, should be completed with a fifth element: *celebration*. To augment Volf's metaphor, David G. McNeish suggests celebration as the final step of embrace. The feasting, music and dancing in the parable of the Prodigal Son are there to 'celebrate the restoration of the younger son to life, family and community'.[21] Celebration as a final act of embrace should also include a *meal*. Schreiter, who views reconciliation more as spirituality than as strategy, sees the Eucharist as the 'foretaste of a reconciled creation', in which 'peace, forgiveness and food come together'. Celebration therefore appears to operate as both a response to reconciliation and an indicator of the reconciliation that is taking place.[22]

The act of embracing does not simply come from one's self but from the divine Spirit of embrace. The Spirit of embrace is the Creator Spirit, who has fashioned human beings to live in true relationship with others. This true relationship cannot be constructed on one's own will, but is generated from one's relation to God's gift of the Spirit. The Spirit – the first fruit of the new creation – is given not only to the whole community, but to every person in that community; the Spirit dwells 'in the hearts' of individuals (see 2 Cor 1:22).[23] For Christians, the most important reason for being willing not only to live with others, but to embrace them positively is the character of God's love as displayed in Jesus Christ.[24]

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20 Miroslav Volf, Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation, Nashville: Abingdon Press 1996, p. 141–145.

21 David G. McNeish, Entering the House of Celebration: The Missing Fifth Act of Volf's Concept of Embrace, in: Practical Theology 9/4 (2016), p. 4.

22 McNeish, Entering the House, p. 5.

23 Miroslav Volf, After our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998, p. 280.

24 Miroslav Volf, Living with the Other, in: Journal of Ecumenical Studies 39/1 (2002), p. 8–9.

4. Closing remarks: Reflection and suggestions

To be a Christian is to love God and to love one's neighbour (Mark 12:30–31). To live as a Christian is to live in a true relationship with the other

In a true relationship with the other we are changed. We absorb a better understanding of difference as part of our human reality in a diverse society. No more xenophobia and hostility toward the others, who are different. No more misleading conceptions of the existence of a superior race and an inferior race. The new perspective of *difference* can hopefully be seen as God's creative work in and through our community life.

We enter new relationships. They shape us. Some things recede into the background, and others take on new importance. We live as ourselves in those things, through which our identity is no longer static, but dynamic. It is multiplied, changed and undergoes important shifts. Thus, our boundaries are flexible and our identity is dynamic.[25] We are people with hospitable and dynamic identities; multiple others are part of who we are. Joas Adiprasetya suggest that a *hospitable* identity[26] requires self-openness to *make space* for the other. To have hospitable identity is to have permeable boundaries, to be an open self and prepared to change.[27] Identity is no longer a self-enclosed constitution.

If we recognise that our identity is determined by our relationship with the other, then the other is not a threat to our self-identity but a constitutive part of our existence as a person. In this sense, the other can be anything: something strange to ourselves, something that we have never seen, felt, experienced or known before. Yet, others may simply mean something different from us, something that differentiates us from them, such as speaking a foreign language, having a different physical appearance, eating strange foods, having a different social status, or being a child with special needs or a follower of another religion, etc.

As part of the wider multi-ethnic society in Indonesia, Christians are agents of peace. Christians, as the Church, have a responsibility to combat violence and racism. It is essential for the Church to be involved in political decisions vis-à-vis the realisation of justice and equality. With respect to political practice, we must separate the task of the Church from those of the state. The Church is responsible for the personal faith growth of society, not the administration of

25 Loc. Cit., p. 8.

26 A hospitability is a practical action to be a friend of a stranger.

27 Joas Adiprasetya, Dialog Antariman: Menyahabati Orang Asing dan Estetika Ketidaktahuan, in: Pakpahan, Binsar J. (ed.), Perjalanan Mendayung Bersama: Buku 2–65 tahun Pdt. Dr. Einar M. Sitompul, Jakarta: Unit Publikasi dan Informasi STT Jakarta 2014, p. 136.

state governance. The Church's task is to encourage government officials, security forces and lay people to uphold human rights and combat discrimination.

Thus, to be a Christian is to live in true relationship with other people, who are different from ourselves. As elaborated above, we cannot exist apart from the other. We become who we are in relationship with other human beings, not as a solitary being. To live without the other is sinful. As Matt Jenson states, 'the sinner is a person, who *tries to live* without relations, who *lives as though* she/he had no relations'.[28]

As a human being, we surely have a cultural identity, for example as Papuans, Javanese, Bataknese, Manadonese, Chinese, etc. This identity is important for our self. It sets our being in a particular time and place. It gives us a sense of belonging to a community. As Cliver and Jane Erricker put it, 'Individual and community identities are located in tension between belonging and difference, historically, culturally and religiously.' *Belonging* is related to the need to find a place in the universe. Every individual needs to find his/her place in society where solidarity, trust, and obligation are developed.[29]

However, it is not the only identity we possess that enables us to live in peace with the other. We need a hospitable identity, which can unify us, not to be uniform but to be an inclusive community; a community, which consists of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. A community that shares the same vision: to live together in justice and peace. The need for peace and inclusive community is becoming increasingly significant in today's world. Since Indonesia is comprised of diverse ethno-race and religious communities, it is essential that we do *not* live as solitary beings. This is a necessary condition for all Christians in Indonesia, if we want to truly be the salt of the Earth.

With regard to reflection, I think a lot more needs to be done. What I have done in the foregoing is a small contribution towards an ongoing discussion on discrimination. In future, we will need to look more thoroughly at the theological conception of mission in the work of various other theologians in relation to human rights. All of these aspects are to be addressed in order to develop a theological concept of mission related to human rights.

28 Matt Jenson, The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on homo incurvatus in se, London: T&T Clark 2006, p. 191.

29 Beril Huliselan, The Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century: Bringing Unity Down to Earth. The Ecumenical Review 60/3 (2009), p. 219.

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PEACE IN PLURALITY

Religious Plurality Peace Study in Kenteng Sub-village, Sumogawe village in the Semarang Regency, Indonesia

Akris Mujiyono

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a broad plurality of religions. Religions in Indonesia can be divided into two major groups: international religions and local religions. The international religions in Indonesia are Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Khonghucu (Confucianism). There are also numerous local religions. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Indonesia there were 245 local religions in 2003; there are now estimated to be about 187 religions.[1]

This religious diversity also means that Indonesia faces enormous problems and challenges to keep the peace. Religious encounters in Indonesia are frequently accompanied by conflict. These religious conflicts are often ignited by many other factors. The most common trigger of conflicts between religions is the politicisation of religion. This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of interfaith conflicts occurred during political events, such as the election of the President or regional leaders.

The philosophical theory of Pancasila is the basis of the Indonesian state and it has an important role to play in the plurality of Indonesia. Borrowing the term used by John Rawls, Pancasila is the result of social contracts between all Indonesian people.[2] Through the five Pancasila principles, all diversity has a guaranteed right to exist. A professor of sociology of religion in Indonesia, John A. Titaley, referred to Pancasila as the religiosity of the Indonesian nation, because, in Pancasila, all religions are equal and their existence recognised.[3]

1 http://beritagar.id/tag/agama-ketujuh.
2 John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2009, p. 65-93.
3 John A. Titaley, Religiositas di alinea tiga: pluralisme, nasionalisme, dan transformasi agama-agama, Salatiga: Satya Wacana University Press 2013, p. 161-169.

However, the problem is that there are frequent violations of Pancasila, because groups believe that they are not Pancasila does not represent them. These groups have enormous influence on the concept of togetherness in Indonesia, especially in the field of religion. Pancasila is considered an unfinished project, and religions are encouraged to live according to the fundamental teachings of their respective religions. In their opinion, Pancasila should be renewed, so that it is more supportive of one religion and that religion should be directed to return to its cultural origin. Interfaith conflicts like these can easily occur, and they threaten the life of the Indonesian nation.

The social life in the sub-village of Kenteng, Sumogawe village, Getasan District, Semarang Regency, Indonesia, is a good example of how to maintain peace and unity in the midst of plurality. This sub-village is already renowned for its tolerance. People live on friendly terms with one another and respect differences. There is a plurality of religions within the village, like a microcosm of the whole of Indonesia.

2. The case of Kenteng sub-village, Sumogawe village

Kenteng sub-village, Sumogawe village in the Getasan district of the Semarang regency in Central Java Province, Indonesia lie on the slopes of Mount Merbabu. This sub-village was founded by a Mataram royal soldier called Kertanegara.[4] When he escaped from the Dutch army, he hid with his wife and family in the forest. With the passage of time, more people settled there, and the settlement became known as Kenteng.[5]

The livelihood of most people here is based on vegetable farming and cattle breeding. The population produces a range of typical mountain vegetables including carrots, tomatoes, broccoli and others. Cattle farming produces high-quality milk. The milk from the Mount Merbabu area is known to be the best quality milk in Indonesia. Because of this, most Kenteng villagers feel in touch with nature.

In Kenteng, four international religions coexist: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, and Buddhism. There is also a local religion, Kejawen. Three of the major religions have houses of worship: one mosque, one vihara and three churches. There is also a place for the Kejawen people: one big tree in

4 Mataram is a kingdom that existed in the Territory of Java Island, before the State of Indonesia was formed. The kingdom existed in the 16th century and its powers included Java, Madura, and west Kalimantan. https://id.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/kesultanan_Mataram.

5 Jati nugraha, Fibri, "Perayaan Keberagaman Di Tengah Perbedaan," Januari - Juni 2019, SINOV: Media Informasi Penelitian Kabupaten Semarang, 2 (n.d.), p. 37.

a tomb, and a large stone believed to mark the spot where the village founder meditated.

The social life of Kenteng is famous for its interreligious harmony. Several families have different religious among their family members, but they still live happily together. The celebration of each great feast of one religion always involves people from other religions. For example, in the Christian celebration of Christmas, Muslim and Buddhist youth come to church on the eve of the celebration to help prepare for the Christmas celebrations. These young people also participate in the Christmas celebrations in the church, itself, singing or performing dances that are typical of their respective religions.

Social conditions in Kenteng sub-village are an ideal for the context of the Indonesian nation, and can even be used as an example for peace in the world. This paper, therefore, tries to find an answer to the question: What is the basis or strength of the people of Kenteng in building peace in the midst of religious plurality? When discussing co-existence in the context of religious difference, two areas must be known, namely the social structure system and the religious system. Knowing about the social structure system is important because, with this, society can be organised regularly without anyone feeling they are oppressed or ignored. And the religious system needs to be known because it is religiosity that moves people spiritually to want to live with the existing system. Emile Durkheim explained that all people were moved by the beliefs they held, or as he called them, Totems.[6] Thus, the act of peace is a result of the reconciliation of religiosity.

This study, therefore, uses Habermas' deliberative democratic theory and Dale Cannon's theory of the spirituality of religions. In his deliberative democratic theory, Habermas argues that the ideal system of government involves the entire community. Cannon's theory of religiosity presents six models of religious spirituality in the world, through which all religions in the world can be categorised. These models are used to recognise the spirituality of the people of Kenteng.

3. Theoretical background

3.1 Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy theory was brought up by Jürgen Habermas. He combined the social theory of the Frankfurt School (Frankfurter Schule) and its

6 Durkheim Emile, The Elementary Forms of The Religious Life, London: George Allen & Unwin LTD 1915, p. 102-119.

critical theory with his communication theory. The theory then was developed in the field of politics into deliberative democracy.[7]

Habermas argues that the creation of a peaceful life in diversity requires a sound, deliberative democratic system. The theory developed by Habermas comes about through combining critical social theory with communication theory. This theory can only function in the public space. These two aspects must be understood in order to comprehend Habermas' concept.

a) Deliberative democratic system

All the various groups in society play a role in the deliberative democratic system. Each group must be represented and all have the same rights. Budi Hardiman said that this also has a negative side – which has to be anticipated – that will lead to the imposition of numerous private interests on the public and can cause chaos if not organized properly.[8]

In this form of democracy, diversity is seen as something good. However, if diversity is oriented towards private interests, this will trigger wild, violent discussions. There are, therefore, prerequisites for interaction in a deliberative democratic system. They are:

1) Comprehensibility: each person interacting in a public space must use correct language, to be understood by all. No languages should be used that are only understood privately; languages must be understood by all. Therefore, religious groups should not use private language. All religious language should be converted into generally understandable language.
2) Truth: whatever is being said has to be true and factual. There should be no conversation based on assumptions or presumptions. Thus, every conversation must be accompanied by accurate evidence, so that the issue under discussion can be trusted and taken as the truth.
3) Normative rightness: whatever is communicated must contain the normative truth that is understand by all. The basis of truth cannot be taken from the perspective of one group alone. Shared truth becomes the main standard in conversation.
4) Truthfulness: the conversation must be honest, not conducted under pressure or lies, so that each word can be trusted.[9] Manipulative language to

7 Peter Beilharz, Teori-teori sosial: observasi kritis terhadap para filosof terkemuk, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar 2002, p. 211.

8 Francisco Budi Hardiman, Demokrasi deliberatif: menimbang negara hukum dan ruang publik dalam teori diskursus Jürgen Habermas, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius 2009, p. 140-141.

9 Jenny Edkins / Nick Vaughan Williams, Teori-Teori Kritis, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar 2013, p. 250.

achieve personal goals will undermine the quality of deliberative democracy.

In addition to these requirements, ethics must continue to be a part of social interactions in this democratic system. Each community involved in interaction must embrace the following commitments:

1) Non Violence: the conversation must be nonviolent. The violence in question refers to both physical and verbal violence; so that conversation can take place with respect for the others. Each person in attendance is awarded equal respect. No one should feel threatened or oppressed in this democratic process.
2) Moral feeling: each person should cherish and love the other. Empathetic thinking will determine the respect of others. Respect for others is essential in this process.
3) Ideal role-taking: each person should be able to take on the role of the other person. It is important to be able to understand the opinions and thoughts of other parties. Each person should be able to step out of his perspective and try to think from the other's point of view.[10] The hearer must be able to understand from the perspective of the speaker, and vice versa; the speaker must be able to understand the situation and the condition of the hearer.

b) Public space

Public space is a place, in which each person or group can meet and freely express views. Public space is a place of exchange of opinions or discussions in the community. Public space comes from the Greek *Polis Koine*: an open space for every citizen.[11] Thus, public space is a space of freedom for society to express its perspective on togetherness. From a sociological perspective, public space is crucial. Without it, people live in isolation and the law is unfairly enforced. It has happened before, because there was an absence of shared control. Public space can be controlled by the government and community groups. Thus, deliberative democracy can only happen in a good public space. Public space is effective when each community member does not think for his or her own benefit. In the public space, each group must think of togetherness from its own individual perspective.

10 Edkins/Williams, Teori-Teori Kritis, p. 251.

11 Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Cambridge: John Wiley & Sons 2015, p. 4.

3.2 Six models of spirituality by Dale Cannon

Cannon identifies the patterns of religions in association with its godhead (Cannon: Ultimate Reality). He describes six different models. The difference he refers to is not an absolute difference, but a difference in its top priorities. Almost every model is found in all religions, but each religion or religious group emphasises one of the models. The six models are the application of: sacred rites, right action, devotions, shamanic mediation, mystical quest and reasoned inquiry.[12]

a) Sacred rites

Sacred rites refer to a path of spirituality centred on rites. The person following this path uses rites to relate to God or to follow the will of his God. The rites are the centre of his or her religion. This does not mean that each rite is a rite in the sense of a 'sacred rite'. What Cannon means is that the groups included in this category regard rites as the centre of worship, not just a medium for worshiping God. Without rites, they are unable to feel God's presence in their lives. This group is usually disciplined and active in ongoing rites. This is because rites are seen as actions that occur in the transcendent world of spirits.[13] By performing rites, they feel as if they are in the spirit world and united with their godhead. And when their rites are completed, they feel as if they are back in the mortal world. Failing to perform rites means that they are violating God's rules, and this is considered calamitous.

b) Right action

In the model of right action, having a good attitude is at the heart of the worship of the people. A good attitude includes proper personal behaviour and also an acceptance of their responsibilities in society. They strive to be moral, highly disciplined and sensitive to worthwhile social issues. Doing good comes first, as opposed to serving their own personal interests. The right actions, to which Cannon refers in his 'way of right action', are actions either carried out by people because they are a form of command from their God or a way of conforming to God's commandments.[14] Therefore, not every action is a form of spirituality, but an act aimed to be the reflection of God's order, or as a reconciliation with God, through good action. If a person fails to perform good action, this will harm him or her.

12 Dale Cannon, Six Ways of Being Religious: A Framework for Comparative Studies of Religion, United States of America: Wadsworth Pub. 1996, p. 51-68.
13 Loc. Cit., p. 51.
14 Loc. Cit., p. 56.

c) Devotion

Devotion is a form of worship that prioritises the inner being in meeting and understanding God's will.[15] Through this, the people focus their inner lives on God. An inner experience that leads people to follow God's will. Thus, outward obedience through adherence to religious ethics is not important; the important thing is to behave in accordance with his or her inner experience. In the tradition of evangelical Christianity, it is known as rebirth.

d) Shamanic mediation

Through this, God is regarded as the source of the solution to life's problems.[16] The solutions for all problems are sought through communication with God. God is believed to determine when it is a good time for humanity to carry out important activities or ceremonies in their lives. Human life is good when it is in harmony with God's will. In this form of spirituality, human life is believed to be dependent on the supernatural world. To achieve this condition of being in harmony with God, an intermediary called a 'shaman' is needed. The shaman does his job by eliminating his consciousness or emptying his existence and allowing it to be replaced by the spirit from the supernatural world. They, thereby, feel that they are communicating directly with God, and can achieve good solutions.

e) Mystical quest

Through this, people seek the experience of meeting God through contemplation and ascetic discipline.[17] Adherents of this path do not easily believe in the teachings of their religious institutions or other figures, before they, themselves, acquire personal experience in meditation. They feel united with God when they practice contemplation or God-focused meditation. Meditation is done consciously, unlike the spirituality of Shamanic mediation, which is done without human consciousness. In this 'way of mystical quest' the existence of man is maintained.

f) Reasoned inquiry

In reasoned inquiry, the focus is on the understanding of the godhead as something reached through research.[18] People are able to understand their godliness with their minds. Adherents of this path usually carry out detailed research of the completeness of religion, such as the religion's holy book, the traditions of

15 Loc. Cit., p. 58.
16 Loc. Cit., p. 60.
17 Loc. Cit., p. 63.
18 Cannon, Six Ways, 69.

its predecessors and the context of religion. In short, this can be described as the 'theological way'. But not everything that uses reason can be said to be this path of spirituality, since it is the continuous process of searching that is considered spiritual. Whether something is right and wrong is not the main issue in this model. The most important aspect of this resourceful research is to achieve the unity of thought by the will of God.[19] In other words, through common sense, people can understand the existence and will of God.

4. The social system and religiosity of the Kenteng sub-village community

The social life in the Kenteng sub-village community is very important. Every month there is a meeting of citizens, to which all family heads are invited to discuss developments and common issues concerning the village. At this meeting, everyone present has the right to speak and they all respect one another. In the event of tension or a problem between religious people, this meeting will be used to find a solution.

In addition, there is an annual festival – Saparan – to celebrate their gratitude for living together as the family of Kenteng village. The Saparan festival involves all religions. People visit each other's houses as if they were part of one big family. They are obliged to eat what has been prepared for them. The highlight is when all the villagers are gathered in a sacred place and start praying together, led by their religious leaders.

The harmonious situation is always created through the closeness of religious leaders. People from Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Kejawen have close relationships. They have agreed to always discuss all issues openly. They also agreed that if anyone decides to convert to another religion, it would not be a problem.

What the Kenteng villagers are doing is practising deliberative democracy, even though they have no knowledge of Habermas' theories. They have formed a public space to become a shared way of controlling themselves. In this public space they are free to speak and each group is rewarded. The public space is, thereby, an important place to build peace in Kenteng sub-village.

The spirit of living peacefully is also rooted in the spirituality of the Kenteng villagers. Although there is a plurality of religions within their society, they share the same passion and commitment to keep the peace. Religion is considered something private, and in 'togetherness' they use the same spirituality: Kejawen.

19 Ibid.

Kejawen spirituality is important in Kenteng because the history of religion in Kenteng sub-village begins with local religion. The fact that Kejawen spirituality applies to the whole community of the Kenteng sub-village was demonstrated by the response to a disturbing series of events some years ago. Six weeks in a row, a person died on a Wednesday. After the sixth death, all the leading figures of society and religious leaders gathered at the village meeting. During the meeting, a figure from Kejawen said that the deaths were a result of a mistake made by the sub-village head that offended the spirit of the village waiter (i.e. the lord/founder of the village). It was proposed that a ceremony should be held to make amends. This was approved by all religious leaders. The next day, all religious people prayed in a procession around the place determined by the Kejawen figure. After the ritual, no one died again on Wednesday.[20]

The concept of the godhead in the Kejawen religion is that God is present in the whole universe and, thus, in everything in this world. People believe that the godhead is also in every other thing or creation. This view has an impact on beliefs in other religions. Such spirituality exists among the people of Kenteng sub-village.

The spirituality of the Kenteng sub-villagers falls into the category of shamanic mediation. The key aspect of this spirituality is harmony with the transcendent world. Conflict has devastating and destructive effects.

5. Theological reflections

In his Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas writes that God is in every act of creation. This does not mean that God is personal, but that God is present in every creation to guide and bestow goodness. The basis of this thought is Isaiah 26:12; 'Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for you also have wrought all our works in us.' God is believed to exist in every human action, for God is the one who actually acts. In John 14:20-21, it is written that the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that every person who believes and acts as he teaches, is in Christ and the Father.[21] If Jesus taught love and peace, then everyone who acts in love and peace is in him.

20 According to the description provided by the Kenteng villagers, a Christian pastor named Jumadi, and affirmed by the Islamic religious figure Mr. Bandi, and from the Buddhist Mr. Pahlan.

21 katolisitas.org, "Kehadiran Tuhan Dalam Mahluk Ciptaan-Nya – Katolisitas.Org," accessed February 19, 2021, https://www.katolisitas.org/kehadiran-tuhan-dalam-mahluk-ciptaan-nya/.

Thus, religious differences do not harm peace, except when they are evidently wrong and dangerous. God is in every other religion if they act in accordance with the teachings of Christ. If other religions make peace and proclaim love, then they are in God and God is in them. When Christians make encounters and peace with other religions, this means that they are acting not as themselves but acting as God. When a man or woman wants to make peace, this means that he or she is following God's commandments. Thus, the priesthood is a form of worship for the believers of God.

Furthermore, in meeting in peace, people are not only acting out of love for other religions, but are also meeting with God, who is in the other. Thus, the encounter must be conducted with respect for others. If, in encounters with others, they demean the other, then this demeans the Lord. If, in the encounter, they truly hear the other, then they are hearing the Lord through the other.

6. Recommendations

The research has found that peaceful life in diversity can be built through the intensity of honest, open and respectful encounters in a neutral place. The more frequently such encounters occur, the better chance they have of forming a peaceful relationship. On the contrary, if these encounters are rare or never take place, this raises suspicions that provoke conflict and hostility.

Honest and respectful encounters require religiosity that encourages people to seek peace. With religiosity, one is moved with confidence. If religiosity encourages people to feel right on their own, then they do not want to make peace with others. In contrast, if religiosity encourages respect for others, then one will act in this manner. This happens because people always act on the basis of their beliefs. Therefore, my recommendations are:

1. To the Church

The church referred to here is a church that has a diverse context or one that is disposed to interfaith conflict. If the church is in a country with only one religion, this recommendation is not appropriate. From this research there are two recommendations:

a) Develop theology that brings about peace

This research has shown that religiosity has a huge impact on peace-building. Such religiosity can be built through the development of correct theology. If the development of theology is practiced or taught, then it forms the spirituality of

the people. Thus, the development of theology, which has an impact of respect for others, brings a reconciling spirituality.

b) Create a space of mutual encounter between religions and be active in that space
In the context of life that encourages people to live individualist lives, public spaces are rare, and where such a public space does exist, it is no longer in demand. This is what is happening in the context of Indonesia today. In some places, public spaces already no longer exist. This has an impact on tensions in interfaith relations. The diverse context of life requires a public space to build open communication and mutual respect. In this case, the duty of the Church, as a peacemaker, is to be the initiator of the formation of public spaces as well as to be active in them.

c) Developing a Theology of peace
A theology in the church influences the beliefs of the congregation. If the theology taught reconciles, then the Church will contribute to peace. Thus it is very important to create a theology that reconciles in a plural context.

d) Developing a spirituality for peace with other religions
It has been explained above that Spirituality is what moves people and crosses religious boundaries, so the development of a reconciling spirituality cannot be done by one religion alone. All religions that exist in one context must work together for building a Spirituality of peace.

e) Developing a Liturgy of Peace
The theology and teaching of the Church must be applied in worship and Liturgy. Teachings can be well elaborated but if the Liturgy is not good, then the congregation will not benefit.

f) Creating a Module Catechization teaching oriented towards the peace of Religion and Society
To accept new members, the church will provide basic teaching for the person who will be the member, referred to as Catechization. Thus, this catechization greatly influences the faith and knowledge of the new members. In order to form a reconciling understanding, the teaching module must also be adjusted.

g) Creating songs for Peace
Singing is very important in the life of the congregation. The song can be sung by the congregation at any time, which means that the influence of this song is

very large in the faith of the congregation. With the creation of a peace song for the congregation, the teaching of peace is more intense.

h) Producing materials for Children of Sunday Worship
Peace should be taught from childhood. The active role of the church in the teaching of peace to the child is to create teaching materials at the children's Sunday service, which reconciles. With this material, it is hoped that the children of the church congregation can learn about diversity and peace from an early age.

i) Collaborate with Christian education institutions to develop a peace education curriculum
The understanding or knowledge of the Church leaders comes from the schools of Theology. Therefore, the teaching curriculum is important in shaping the understanding of Church leaders. Thus, the church is obliged to cooperate in forming an education curriculum on peace that is obtained from practical matters.

j) Establishing networks with other Religions
The Church cannot strive alone for peace in society. All civil societies must work together in shaping peace. Thus, the church must create networks with other religions as well as all existing community groups, in order to create a peace program at regular intervals.

2. To the UEM

a) Promote equality between groups or religions in member churches
The problem in some countries with religious plurality is inequality, or the dominance of the majority religion. This leads to violence between religions or inharmonious relationships within society. In such situations, peace and honest encounters are difficult to establish. In such situations, there can be peace, but achieved through compulsion or in intimidation. The 'little one' follows the 'big one' for the sake of security, not because of his freedom.

In this condition, the UEM can encourage member churches to act as initiators in the formation of good relations between religious people, and also in the formation of a common space. In an effort to encourage this, the UEM could provide educational material in a range of formats and comparative studies to member churches focusing on methods of establishing relationships and forming a common space.

b) Encourage and facilitate the development of open theology

This study found that true spirituality leads to the right movement or action and also reconciles. True spirituality is built on the basis of true theology. Thus, the role of theology in directing human actions is extremely important. The UEM with members in three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe), has a great opportunity to develop correct, reconciled theology. Theology from the perspective of three continents can be formed as a UEM contribution to realising world peace. The theology that has arisen out of the struggles of the three continents has enabled the UEM to develop a valuable theological concept to pass on to all member churches.

Furthermore, the UEM could encourage churches to carry out research into, and develop, a specific contextual theology for peace. This encouragement could also take the form of providing facilities for the exchange of theologians with the aim of developing peace theology in its context.

c) Actively participate in dealing with interfaith conflicts in the countries of member churches

Conflicts between religious people often occur in some countries with religious plurality. Religious conflicts not only affect the religious context, but also has an impact on the political, economic and social contexts. This research has shown that conflicts between religious people can be anticipated and resolved through honest, open encounters and through the spirituality of peace. Thus, the UEM can act as a facilitator of reconciling encounters. It will not be easy, and will require much thought and attention. However, it should be possible for the UEM, as a mission community, with members in three continents. Thus, the UEM can create a well-trained group of peace volunteers, specifically in the field of social and religious peace in each UEM member region. This group should have the time and the energy to focus on peace and have an extensive network to help each other.

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THE REGRESSION OF SPIRITUALITY AMONG YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY

Two Key Challenges Facing Churches in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Kavira Nganza

1. Introduction

The society and the church are living at a time of great peril, with demoralising effects on, and the progressive destruction of, our communities. In great part this has been caused by the young, vibrant generation's dissatisfaction with the church. Is the Church failing to change beliefs and morality, and address gender exclusion and violence within families and in society? Since its initiation in the Book of Acts, the Church has played a major role in building strong united communities, influenced people in different areas of life and transformed minds away from false and negative beliefs. However, it is still evident that some members of the Church continue to be involved in practices contrary to biblical truth. Tribalism also exists within the Church, even among its leaders, which leads to increases in marital conflicts, biblical illiteracy, the regression of spirituality, moral breakdown, a lack of integration of women in pastoral ministry and the discrimination of women within families and society, to mention only a few. The Church seems to be struggling to live a life worthy of the call to reach its own first and, in turn, have an impact on the world around them. In this paper, I will, therefore, seek to address this regression of spirituality among Church members, especially young people, as well as the discrimination of women within the family and society.

2. The challenges and how to address them

Society is suffering under the impact of moral regression within the Church, which is spreading like a disease throughout our communities, influencing and determining the world viewpoints of many, including not only the future leaders and legislators of our society, but also our children. Scholars have reflected on

the challenges facing churches in the context of Africa. Theodor Rathgeber and Jochen Motte from Germany have noted the growth of xenophobia, racism, violent extremism, terrorism, killing, terror attacks and opposition within political parties that is being experienced in many religions throughout the world. These challenges prevent people from living peacefully and thwart the evolution of society[1]. James Kansah, when talking about politics and governance, mentioned wars, ethnic conflicts, the abuse of power and authority, the poor use of natural, human and economic resources, poverty, the lack of basic infrastructure and many other factors. If these are to be addressed, it is important that moral and theological values are applied to promote God's grace, love, character and actions[2].

These challenges, which require the intervention of the Church in the building of inclusive communities that act against discrimination, exclusion and violence, has attracted the interest of scholars, who develop ideas to help alleviate the situation and repair the broken hearts these challenges have caused. Another scholar, Heidi A. Campbell from the USA, has referred to the recent challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a serious impact on church gatherings. Social and physical distancing prevented church members from gathering as a community to feel God's loving experience and love[3].

The Church amounts to a lot more than simply a building, in which Christians worship on a Sunday. The Church is an active Christian presence that is supposed to impact the lives of individuals in the local community and liberate those, who are psychologically broken within society. I, therefore, want to emphasise two principal challenges facing the Church in Africa, particularly in Eastern DR Congo and in the city of Goma: the regression of spirituality among young people and gender issues. I believe that examining these issues will lead the Church to reflect on what it can resolve or remedy and how it can act to change the situation before it ends in complete despair.

I understand 'youth' to include any person, regardless of gender, between the ages of 14 and 35, as specified within the administrative youth regulation of the Baptist Church in Central Africa (CBCA), who are the backbone of any society, since they are the ones, who will go on to shape the future of their societies. Seventy per cent of the African region's population is under the age of 40. All other

1 Theodor Rathgeber / Jochen Motte (eds.), Peace among the people: Interreligious action for peace and inclusive communities, Solingen: Foedus-Verlag 2018.

2 James Nkansah-Obrempong, Foundations for African Theological Ethics, UK: Langham 2013.

3 Heidi A. Campbell, The distanced church reflections on doing church online, USA, Digital Religious Publications 2020.

age groups – children, teenagers, middle-aged and senior citizens – rely on the youth and expect a lot from them. This makes them a group that is more important than any other age group with respect to the society of today and to the future. Eric Erikson says that if adolescents find good mentors, if they receive appropriate encouragement and empowerment and are given the opportunity to develop a positive vocational identity and the ability to stay consistently true to themselves, they will be able to emerge from this stage of life with a strong sense of self and feelings of independence and control[4]. However, if people around them impose things on them or criticise and abuse them, they will feel confused, have a fragile sense of self and live their lives uncertain of their identity with respect to beliefs, ideals and values. In brief, this stage is more affected than any other by daily interactions with others. The implication in Erikson's theory is that what young people observe and experience of adult behaviour, will affect them and change them either positively or negatively. Scholars have confirmed that children's behaviour and what they retain in their minds are influenced more by what they observe, in practice, than by what they hear. This means that telling them about theories with no practical application holds them back from following the Evangelical way of commitment to God and the Church.

I also asked two ladies about the current challenges facing the Church, with the aim of conducting small-scale empirical research among women in key leadership positions in the Church. Their responses concurred with these findings. They mentioned, for example, the love of money among Church leaders, their failure to be decisive with regard to the integration of women in the pastoral ministry, the tribalism and favouritism within the Church, fornication and unfaithfulness within marriage, inadequate Bible training, misinterpretation of Biblical scriptures as well as violence in families and poverty[5]. These women, like some others, may be able to recognise what is going wrong but, because they lack the opportunity to express their views, they remain silent.

Globally, women make up 43 per cent of the world's agricultural labour force, rising to 70 per cent in some countries, while their central role in society ensures stability, progress and the long-term development of nations. Across Africa, 80 per cent of agricultural production is in the hands of smallholder farmers, most of whom are 'rural women'. This means that when church leaders are living in a context dominated by conflict, tribalism, vilification, defamation and the exclu-

4 Kendra Cherry, Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, in: Very well mind, The scru (June 2020).

5 Bira Mavoko of 54 years old, a former comity member in women ministry in the congregation of Virunga, CBCA church and Kaswera Muhanya of 60 years old, from Kyeshero quarter.

sion of women and children, young people are simply not in a position to reconcile the proclamation of the Gospel with how life is actually lived. The more elderly church members appear to ignore the negative impacts this neglect of, and lack of consideration for, others has on the up-and-coming generation.

Furthermore, where I come from, different Church leaders invite me to attend youth programmes, particularly to preach, lead seminars or hold workshops on diverse issues. In some discussions, young people say that, when old people talk to them, they tend to take a position of authority instead of collaboration, seeking to impose their opinions without consultation or in co-operation with the young people. From their point of view, adults do not consider young people to be mature enough to contribute to important decisions, which, in itself, is a form of discrimination resulting in a lack of interest among young people for the matters of faith proclaimed by adults. From the debates I have had with young people, I believe that if adults are to teach anything to young people, it is important that they listen to them and consider allowing them to participate in decisions concerning what they are to do. Otherwise, such frustrating relationships simply push young people even further away from 'normal life'.

The strategies Jesus used when he was preaching varied according to his audience, because he knew that good things could not be transmitted adequately when inappropriate methods or approaches are used. When talking to young people, adults sometimes use the Bible as if it were some kind of tract or intimidatory treatise dispensing judgement instead of love. The message, thereby, instigates more fear, instead of providing hope and facilitating deliberated decision. Listening to people and giving them the room and freedom to express themselves enables them to feel included and integrated.

When I asked a group of young people from different church denominational backgrounds attending Majengo High School about the possible reasons for spiritual regression as one of the challenges facing their respective churches, one of the three challenges – alongside hypocrisy and materialism – that dominated their discussion was tribalism. When I, then, asked them to describe how this manifests itself, they replied that when attending worship, Church members appear to be united, living in communion with one another. But when it comes to filling positions in the Church, it is not so much a matter of competence, but about who the people are with respect to their age, tribe, gender and where they are from[6]. Some minority tribes seem to be excluded from Church positions, from the lowest to the highest levels within the Church, from, for example, being

6 Interview of young people from Majengo High School, Goma city, Democratic Republic of Congo, April 2021.

chairman of a group or a particular ministry. I asked the group how this affects Church life? They said that this is a mockery of Christianity and commitment to God and has an impact on Church members' financial contributions. The Church needs to reflect on John 17:20-23, in which Jesus prayed for the believers to be as united as the Trinity, itself, because what is powerful in the Church and the Gospel is that they embrace the unity of different groups and the diverse tendencies of different people. The Church's ministry should break down the walls of difference that divide people. If they fail to do so, young people, confronted with such challenges, may choose churches they find more appropriate, because they avoid perpetrating homogeneity among their leaders[7].

The regression of spirituality has also been influenced by traditional belief systems and values. During the 21st Century, the Church has been working in a world that is advancing at very high speed. People are exposed more to an ever-expanding media than in previous centuries. If the Church wishes to remain relevant, it must keep pace, without compromising the Gospel, when it proclaims the good news of love and liberation. The Church needs to revise how it contributes to peace among people. Other Church members live and work in a state of Biblical illiteracy, leading them to misunderstand and misinterpret Holy Scripture. Yet, the Church should play a key role in educating believers and inculcating discipline to confront weakness. Since its foundation, the Church has helped countless people change their way of thinking, understand scriptures, leading them to valuable behaviour and deeds. The Church can still do this and demonstrate the good news of the Gospel through the example of its evangelical deeds.

When somebody believes they are a victim of discrimination, exclusion and/or violence, in psychological terms, she/he can have two unconscious reactions: they can either fight (i.e. seek revenge/retaliate) or take flight (i.e. remain quiet and, ostensibly, show they do not care. The consequences of the first response can intensify the vicious circle of hidden conflicts, misunderstanding, favouritism and violence within the Church. Consequently, at a time when the Church is facing such challenges as hunger, poverty, unfaithfulness in marriage and mismanagement of financial resources, it is also having to devote time to deal with discriminatory issues.

In April 2021, during a workshop involving parents of pupils at Majengo High school on the issues of justice and trauma prevention within the family, the second major issue they raised when I asked them to highlight practices that demonstrate injustice among children in the family, was the allocation of

7 https://biblical-african.com/blogs/challenges-facing-the-church-in-africa/.

domestic tasks among boys and girls. They emphasised that girls do many more of these than boys and, unfortunately, are also more likely to be on the receiving end of criticism, humiliation and reproaches, and not recognised in their families. Such behaviour affects Church members, since the Church, itself, is made up of families. The treatment of women and girls in their families appears to be carried over into the Church, where people do not understand 1 Corinthians 12:1–31, which speaks about the gifts of the Spirit given to the Church: to all believers, including women and the young. Biblical illiteracy seems to cause disputes over small, insignificant things. Yet the Church should be focusing on evangelism, proclaiming salvation in Christ to those, who do not believe in him. True evangelism, as noted by David Bosch, is a matter of calling people to repentance and conversion, proclaiming forgiveness of sins, inviting them to become living members of Christ's community on earth and begin a life of service to others through the power of the Holy Spirit[8]. In this concept of mission, there is no mention of differences of gender among people used by God as instruments, because God uses who he wants, where he wants, as he did for Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary, mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Mathew 1:1–16). These unlikely women, says Francine Rivers[9] changed eternity.

The Church is composed of people from families. Thus, when there is no gender balance within families, integrating the issue into the church may be difficult, since those deciding such matters are people, who fail to recognise and practise it in their own families. Nevertheless, the Church is supposed to educate families and society about new relationships strengthened by the spiritual relationship between Christ and the Church, as presented in Ephesians 5:21–6:9.

Ephesians 5:21–6:9 looks at the new relationships established in Christ and who governs the diverse categories of people: husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, i.e. 'the strong and the weak'[10]. Shawn Lazar[11] suggests it can be extended to include many other different roles in society – for example, teachers and students, pastors and church members, vendors and customers, managers and workers, God and believers – which have a bearing on your relation to Christ and the Church. Christiane Dieterté observed that sub-

8 David Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in Theology of mission, New York: Maryknoll 1991.

9 Francine Rivers, A lineage of grace: Five unlikely women who changed eternity, China: Tyndale 2004.

10 Christiane Dieterté, Statuts des textes bibliques et théologiques du couple. Etudes théologiques et religieuses, in: Lumière et vie 174 (1985), p. 63.

11 Shawn Lazar, What is important in living the Christian life, in: Grace in focus magazine, Amsterdam, 1st July 2018.

mission to each other characterises the spirit that conducts community life and relations between the weak and the strong in the Christian household of the first century. The function of 'Chief', as practised by Christ in the Church, is founded on love and self-donation.[12]

This passage should enlighten African cultures about showing consideration for each other within the family as the basic cell and basic unit of society and extend it to the workplace, one of the microcosmic structures of the universe. Although the text focuses more on duties and responsibilities, love, submission and respect between husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant in particular, it also invokes the harmony intended by God, the ruler of the universe[13] and his faithfulness as illustrated through his deeds for the benefit of believers. This text should inspire churches about how people should be considered in the family, the Church and all of society.

Galatians 3:28 states that, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. This seems to minimise consideration of the differences and cultural structures of superiority and inferiority that divide people, including cultural differences between male and female, old and young, between people in high and low positions in different tribes and cultures, just as the Apostle Paul talked about equality between Jews and Gentiles. The relationships between, and consideration for, each other should be practised in the same way as one's relations with the Lord. The contrary of the love and unity conceived by God can lead to an absence of respect, discrimination and violence in how people behave towards each other. This reflection on new relationships between people should act as a good example of how every relationship within the family, the Church and society should be understood.

The Church in Africa needs to address the above- mentioned false practices if it wants to grow spiritually and have a holistic impact on society. The Beijing Platform for Action calls for a dual strategy: gender mainstreaming complemented with inputs designed to address specific gaps or problems encountered in the promotion of gender equality[14]. This platform also said that achieving equality between women and men would require changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, in institutions and legal frameworks, in economic institutions and political decision-making structures[15]. In contrast

12 TOB, La Bible, Edition Intégrale, Paris: Cerf 1988, p. 2815.
13 Carol A. Newsom / Sharon H. Ringer, Women's Bible Commentary: Expanded Edition with Apocrypha, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 1998, p. 430.
14 Angela E.V. King, Gender mainstreaming: An overview, New York: United Nations 2002.
15 Julia Franziska Kohler, Mainstreaming women's human right to political participation: The United Nations' approach in Afghanistan, Article 3, 2004.

to the cultural and traditional beliefs that regard women and girls as being inferior and dependent on men, the Church, as follower and representative of God, should change how it perceives women and girls and include them as God would. As part of its enormous effort and strategies to address the challenge of women in the pastoral ministry, the CBCA should also focus on parental education by supporting facilitators of gender balance within the family, which would entail working to counter the negative understanding of male and female role attribution. It should, then, increase the number of women working actively in congregations, as a sign of justice and inclusion and, as Claudia Brinkmann-Weiβ says, this could lead to a life in real communion as brothers and sisters[16].

3. Recommendations

To the Church

- After observing and discovering that Christian values are retreated at all levels, the researcher recommends that the church leaders, at the top of the church, through each department`s activity, should do a proximity monitoring of other church leaders about the Christian commitment and testimony in daily life within the society and the family, so that it may fulfil its mission of making each church member a disciple of Jesus.
- CBCA church is requested to reinforce teachings about the ministry for all believers without social, cultural, and gender differences. This has to be applied and reputed many times by starting in the Sunday school service, in schools, in the family, and in each congregation for changing the criminal mentality of exclusion. Today's church should communicate Biblical values that promote each body`s consideration and self-esteem among others within the society and the church setting.
- For addressing discrimination and differences among people within the church, it is necessary to revise the preaching of Gospel which awaken Christian awareness about the real practice of God`s love, character, grace, and action to purify continuously the church members and each one living in the world. Otherwise, the church is denying faith and God`s love when giving space to societal and gender differences within its members
- The church has to make and apply clear decisions about involving the category of discriminated people in different available positions, according to

16 Kambale Kahongya Bwiruka / Jochen Motte (eds.), Peace among people: Interreligious actions of peace and inclusive communities, Solingen, Foedus-Verlag 2020.

each one`s skills. This will help to face the challenges of exclusion and discrimination, and will repair broken hearts from the mentioned issues within the church;
- Among its activities showing faith through actions, the church leaders through different departments and services should teach the congregation members what means the presence of Christ among people and what is his mission of bringing life in the world. This can help the church members to consider each one the way Christ does.
- CBCA leaders should not fear about intimidations from out, but could try to apply what they decide in meetings.
- The change has to be applied from small practices through different areas. The way people from the church manage money, harvest; the way spouses interact among themselves in front of children, the way of responding to each other, all this changes the mentality of those who are around. This should start by pastors' families and other church leaders and then spread in the community. However, if those preaching God's word are not the one living the real Christianity, it is difficult to change others.

To UEM

- UEM community is requested to work without getting tired about the management of differences.
- UEM should continue doing research about why people are not flexible to change culture patterns of doing things. Is it not from a psychological wounded background or from incensed hearts? What is the hidden reality of gender balance in families and households? Family life and consideration of people starts from the base level for having influence on the huge community.
- UEM should also provide support for organizing campaigns of Evangelism, focusing on the real change of hearts and actions for being salt and light of the world. This will bring authentic Christianity, the ethical and moral practices into the society.

4. Conclusion

In order to build unity, peace, justice and social equality in societies, while reducing discrimination, exclusion and violence, the Church must work beyond retrogressive cultural beliefs and ways of acting. The world needs to adopt a

Christ-like model of leadership if it wants to combat the vices within the Church and society. Church leaders require determination, a strong heart and self-confidence to implement church assembly decisions and act appropriately to fulfil God's mission. They must proclaim the Gospel of love and grace to everyone, not only through words but more through deeds and human justice, in light of God's methodology. This would enable the church to face current challenges and draw each other into God's universal service, which promotes all Church members and enlightens the world.

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THE ACTIVE PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH

As a Solution to Violence in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

Fiston Mumbere Ngesera

1. Description of the challenge

For several decades, Africa has been experiencing socio-political upheavals with multiple and complex causes. In a particular way, the Great Lakes region has been torn by multiple forms of violence, conflicts, confrontations and inter-ethnic torments since the winds of democracy have blown across the continent. This region is in the grip of a progressive destruction at all levels, and its inhabitants have lost their specific character, their dynamic joy, this human love that leads to action and social development. This region is today the reality of a hostile world, full of selfishness, envy, tensions and rivalries that are harmful to human beings, animals and ecology.

The challenge becomes even greater when one imagines that the young generation (children and young people) growing up in this region only knows the experience of violence and already sees it as a way of life in their interaction with others. In this sense, they run the risk of developing inhuman reflexes, as Ekpang so aptly put it:

> "Victims of such experiences, [they] will always tend to develop a thick and insensitive '*shell*' in the face of attacks on the dignity and safety of others, the culture they know being synonymous only with the cult of infinite and limitless violence. Trained in the school of violence, these children and young people will be led to believe that the only way to make themselves heard is through violence and weapons, without any consideration for dialogue and alternative options for peaceful conflict resolution"[1].

However, the Church has a very strong and significant present in the region. Indeed, more than 60% of the population of the countries of the Great Lakes

1 E.B. Ekpang, Pour une culture de la paix en Afrique de l'Ouest, in Lutte contre la prolifération des armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest. Manuel de formation des forces armées et de sécurité, Geneve: Nations Unies 2003, p. 112.

region is recognized as a member of the Church. This paradox of the coexistence of the Church and violence in the population is a real challenge.

2. Empirical theory

In the face of violence, the measures that need to be taken are linked to the search for peace and social harmony. In a region where these values seem to have been reduced to a minimum, violence remains an inherent part of human life.

It is well known that the Church is, by definition, a reconciling institution that can enable cohabitation between warring people. Etymologically, the translation of the Greek word "ekklésia" found in the New Testament means "assembly of believers", i.e. those called by God to form a community. The term "ekklesia" itself is a translation of the Hebrew word "qâhâl" which in the Old Testament refers to the assembled people of God. As a word with multiple meanings, the Church can also be defined as "a building where Christians meet to worship", "a religious society founded by Jesus Christ, the Church as the body of Christ", or "a Christian community", or "a community of men and women, bound together by the same faith... and who recognize the authority of the same leaders", or "the whole body of people professing the same doctrines or aiming at the same goal"[2]. Over the years, especially in the African context, characterized by solidarity and hospitality, we have come to speak of the Church-Family of God.

This understanding of the word Church, which conveys the idea of communion or cohabitation among the people who constitute it, sheds light on the role this institution should have in the Great Lakes region of Africa, with the goal of restoring life and well-being to all those who live there.

We should also not lose sight of the role that the Church has played in society since its genesis. It has played an essential role in the regulation and social change of societies. In fact, one cannot immerse oneself in the dynamics of European civilizations without taking into account the socializing and mobilizing action of the Christian Church, more precisely the Roman Catholic Church. This was the case in Europe until the beginning of the 20th century, when even secular states such as France, Belgium and Portugal recognized the place of the Church. In Africa, too, the Church has played an important role in social transformation in several countries. For example, consider the national conferences in Benin, Togo, Congo, and Zaire, which were led by ecclesial figures, or the role that churches played in the transformation in Madagascar.

2 Dictionnaire Petit Larousse Illustré, Paris: Les Editions Françaises Inc. 2004, p. 365.

3. Theological reflection

Talking about peace and a Christian commitment as "peacemakers", are at the center of the proclamation of the Gospel. The commitment to peace-building, as well as to liberation, is closely related to evangelization and thus to the objective coherence between praxis and our belief.

The God of Christians is the Lord of history who grants mercy to all men and women without destroying the autonomy of the world, but making it possible within the framework of man's creative freedom. The Bible makes it clear that the purpose of creation is philanthropic. The human being was created for a life of fullness and joy with his fellow human beings (Genesis 1:27; 2:18 etc.)[3]. This process of bringing humans to the fullness of life (John 10:10) takes place in history, in the synergy of human and God's efforts. The entire history of humanity is under the sign of this horizon of divinization, transmitted through the holy women and men of history, through the processes of liberation.

In this sense, the Christian faith is opposed to the appearance of the world, where the omnipresence of evil seems to be confirmed as injustice and suffering without return. God created humans to communicate his life in fullness to all creation. Evil in the form of suffering or violence is not part of God's plan, as we can read in the first two chapters of Genesis. Moreover, if evil happens, it is by human initiative, since it does not belong to the creation and the first will of God.

Evil is not God's will, it is not part of His creation or His plan for man[4]. If evil takes over in our society, it is a weakness of those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, because God calls all his creatures, the human beings in charge, to a peaceful and fulfilled life.

For the Christian conscience, God reveals himself as the God who liberates from evil, as the one who comes close to the victims and the suffering; as the one who shows us the way to overcome evil. Consequently, the commitment to the realization of God's creative project becomes the place where our faith in God and in man is verified (James 2:14). It is precisely in the radical investment in solidarity with those who suffer the cruel consequences of evil in the world and in the consequent commitment against the structures of violence that the Christian faith is lived in all its fullness.

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3 The Bible is based on a noble conception of the human being as a being of relationship. God created human beings, male and female, as partners, to live in relationship with him. He created them in his likeness to enjoy a natural union and fullness of life with him and with all creation. Relationships run through the whole Bible and even when they are broken, God always envisages reconciliation and living together.

4 Adolphe Gesché, Le mal, coll. Dieu pour penser no 1, Paris 2002, p. 86.

4. Individual findings

The faith of the Church must be lived, not just taught. It is imperative, as Alexander states[5], to follow the concern of the prophets that "true religion is not only a set of rites and beliefs, but also a way of life"[6]. The actions of the church must therefore be palpable, and if the church remains indifferent, nothing will change and nobody will see the glory of God. This is probably where what Desmond Tutu calls liberation theology comes in when he points out that:

> "Liberation theology challenges churches everywhere to be mindful of their prophetic mission to speak for the voiceless, for those who are too weak to stand up to injustice themselves"[7].

It is true that, as De Coninck notes, the exile and return of Israel as we read about it in the Old Testament places us at the heart of what makes up the fabric of our Christian life in modern societies. Like the Jews of biblical times, we are in the minority. We are dependent on people who do not share all our choices and who hold the various political, economic, media, cultural and educational powers. What we are trying to build is not only for us, but also for the global society, because we are in solidarity with it[8]. Nevertheless, in the face of the degradation of life, we must arrive at the possibility of re-imagining life, of thinking or conceiving a new social praxis and mobilizing the masses accordingly to make life effective not only within the Great Lakes region but also in the whole of the African continent[9].

As this African region is in dire need of a lasting peace, this must be done through the Church which positions itself as an intermediary between God and his people, thus transmitting God's will to humanity and placing itself in the role of Shepherd for these people[10]. The Church must let the people enjoy the favor

5 Pat Alexander (ed.), Le monde la bible, Paris: Sator 1982, p. 131

6 Understanding the message in the present context is of great importance. As Westermann says, "all the messages of the prophets are addressed to their present audiences and less to those of the future". Cf. Claus Westermann, L'Ancien Testament et Jésus-Christ, Paris: Cerf 1997, p. 27.

7 Desmond Tutu, Prisonnier de l'Esperance, Paris: Le centurion 1984, p. 134.

8 Frederic De Coninck, Bâtir dans une société en lambeaux: Actualité de Néhémie, Paris: Ed. du Moulin 1999, p. 12.

9 Tshiakany Tshiabantu Mbaya, Jubilé pour l'Afrique appauvrie, endetté et déshumanisée: De traditions jubilaires orientales aux jalons d'une théologie politique, Kinshasa: EDUPC 2008, p. 439.

10 The shepherd is in fact the one who takes care of sick or injured animals, of females giving birth or nursing, of newborn lambs; in a word, he must ensure that no member of the flock is lost. He is the one who gathers his flock, and this concern for unity, combined with that of leadership, characterises his main function. Cf. Philippe de Robert, Le Berger d'Israël,

of God, who is the sole guarantor of the world and all that happens in it[11]. Peter Batchelor will say that the Church is unique. It is in a position to meet both the material and spiritual needs of man. Her priority is (or should be) people and their welfare[12]. Indeed, development cannot be reduced to mere economic growth, but must be integral, i.e. promote all people and the whole person. Neglecting one aspect reinstates tolerance of sins, which in turn contributes to the multiplication of cases of violence or anti-life[13].

This Church, being composed of individuals, is called to bear witness to the grace of God and the Gospel by bringing important teaching into the social process[14]. The task of the preacher is therefore to show how the Christian faith is important in individual and social life[15]. This means that proclaiming the Gospel is not only oral but must also be made concrete through actions that embody the Word of God in human history or reality[16]. The Church must raise its prophetic voice when the oppressive state apparatus confiscates with impunity the inalienable right of the oppressed to freedom of expression and to organize peaceful marches to demand the advent of a new political order that can ineluctably contribute to the establishment of the rule of law, respectful of democratic values. The Church will fight energetically against the oppressive forces of anti-life that sow death and desolation among the people who are drifting in many directions[17].

Essai sur le thème pastoral dans l'Ancien Testament, Cahiers Théologique, Paris: Delachaux et Mistelle 1968, p. 27. The Church must also act as God's real representative on earth. Indeed, for Israel, God does not need to remain in a stable dwelling place. He does not hesitate to share the precarious, temporary and transitory conditions of his people. He walks with his people in the precariousness of their history in order to sustain them. Cf. Jean-Louis Ska, Les énigmes du passé: Histoire d'Israël et récit biblique, Brussels: Lessius 2001, p. 66.

11 Sara Japhet, L'historiographie postexilique, in Albert de Pury / Thomas Römer / Jean-Daniel Macchi (éds.), Israël construit son histoire, l'historiographie deutéronomiste à la lumière des recherches récentes, Genève: Labor et Fides 1996, p. 151.

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13 Kahwa Njojo, Concept de non-violence à la lumière de Romains 12:9-21, Mémoire du DEA, Kinshasa: UPC 2008, p. 129 (Inédit).

14 Reinhold Niebuhr, The problem of Modern Church Triviality, in: Christianity and Crisis, n°22 (1962), p. 223-228, here: 225, quoted by Muteho Kasongo, Le paradigme de Reinhold Niebuhr pour l'Ethique du pouvoir et le rôle de l'Eglise dans l'Afrique en mutation, in: Bulletin de Recherches Théologiques et Sociologiques: La responsabilité de l'Eglise face aux mutations démocratiques en Afrique des Grands Lacs, N° Spécial, in: Revue annuelle (2015), p. 42.

15 Reinhold Niebuhr, Justice and Mercy, New York: Harper and Raw Publichers 1974, p. 5.

16 Idem.

17 Valère Kambale Kandiki, Eglise et promotion d'une éducation émancipatrice, in: Bulletin de Recherches Théologiques et Sociologiques: La responsabilité de l'Eglise face aux mutations démocratiques en Afrique des Grands Lacs, N° Spécial, Revue annuelle (2015), p. 21.

5. Recommendations to my church (the CBCA) and the UEM communion

a) To my church, the CBCA

In the Great Lakes region of Africa, my church, the CBCA, needs to do the following to let the light of Christ shine.

1. Strive for the peaceful cohabitation of the peoples of the region

The Church in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, as an intercultural and international community, should aim at making possible the unity and peaceful cohabitation of the peoples of this region. It must, while respecting the differences between them, establish a space for dialogue and reconciliation so that the different groups or ethnicities can sit down together and commit themselves to living in perfect brotherhood. In this case, the message of God's love, equality of all, mutual respect, forgiveness and the willingness to work for the flourishing of God's creation should be the basis of the Church's teaching in this region. The Church must therefore understand that this ethnic diversity in the region is a great wealth for the glory of God and the growth and well-being of the whole of creation. This is where the unity of the Church in diversity is manifested.

Thus, in brief, in the struggle for coexistence, the Church must:

- Denounce the evil of conflict and advocate the need for peaceful coexistence between peoples;
- Foster a climate of frank and real dialogue between peoples;
- Promote reconciliation, peace and conviviality among peoples.

2. Combating social inequalities

The church is expected to be a committed and engaging institution in the world and society. It welcomes and cares for the social situation of the people at its disposal, advocating equal opportunities for all. It therefore participates according to its possibilities in all that can contribute to the evolution of man, to his social promotion and the improvement of his standard of living. She remains in solidarity with the world or humanity that suffers[18] in order to give it a good chance to live.

Espeja reveals that the Church as a sign announcing the kingdom of God to the world must live in solidarity with humanity. Its insertion in the world and

18 Dieudonne Musuvaho Paluku, Quelle église du Christ au Congo (ECC) pour le Nord-Kivu?, Braine-l'Alleud: Editeurs de Littérature Biblique 1998, p. 22.

in the social fabric is a permanent task for the Christian community. It is called to be "close to" or "in front of" and above all "with" this world, embarked on the same ship and taking part in the common adventure of humanity, making itself contemporary with mankind to the ultimate consequences[19].

The Church must stand by the side of those who are oppressed in order to liberate them and establish a just society in which it is good to live. This church must share in the adventures, failures and successes of society. Rootedness in this world is part of its own identity. And as Espeja writes, the church is the bearer of an original experience that must be Good News:

> "The proclamation of freedom in love that goes out to the brother inaugurates a dynamism of universal reconciliation, the proclamation of a stronger hope that gratefully assumes the density of the world and enlivens the future".[20]

From this, then, flows the Church's commitment to enter into the dynamic of God's love, which identifies with and shows solidarity with the victims of violence. In short, in the fight against social inequality, the Church must:

- Work for an egalitarian community;
- Denounce all violations of justice;
- Work for the establishment of real justice among the people;
- Reach out to threatened communities and enable them to regain their rights;
- To advocate for equal opportunities among the peoples of the region;
- Proclaiming the message of Christ's liberation, which also calls for the liberation of those who suffer.

3. Fighting against poverty

The work of fighting poverty is one of the Church's main responsibilities. Basically, the conflicts that have plagued the Great Lakes region of Africa for almost three decades have led to the impoverishment of many. These conflicts, which have led to inter and intra ethnic tensions, population growth, land issues and nationality problems[21], have plunged many people into a life of misery.

Also, it should be noted that in this region, poverty is more than a lack of income, it is a complex multi-faceted condition that has become the main feature of life for both poor and non-poor people. While tangible aspects such as income and basic infrastructure are powerful and well-known drivers of poverty, equally if not more important. Intangible factors also contribute strongly

19 Jesús Espeja, L'église, mémoire et prophétie, Paris: Cerf 1987, p. 14.
20 Espeja, L'église, p. 240.
21 Rapport: Etude sur la problématique foncière au Nord-Kivu, RDC, Janvier 2010, p. 5.

to poverty in the region. These include insecurity, marginalization or exclusion, and a culture of impunity[22]. The worst thing is that this same poverty contributes to the cycle of violence when some people think that they have to rise from poverty or get rich by using violence. The Church must therefore face up to this.

In the fight against poverty, the Church must:
- Train the people for self-help and economic development;
- Support people who are victims of poverty and help them to rebuild their lives;
- Multiply relief projects for the poor;
- Encourage self-help and community work groups to raise the standard of those most in need.

b) To the UEM communion
As a coordinating and linking body among several church communities, the UEM must
- Take ownership of the recommendations made to the African Churches and especially those in the Great Lakes region.
- Encourage the ecclesial communities of the Great Lakes region of Africa and even of the whole of Africa to join efforts to accomplish their prophetic mission.
- To support the steps put in place for the development and the good life of the people of this region.

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A WELCOMING, EQUAL RIGHTS FAMILY

The Context of the Church in Rwanda

Francoise Niyonsaba

1. Introduction

The Church is the community of believers, composed of people from different nations, cultures, languages, lay people, the clergy, children and adults, weak and strong, men and women[1]. The great commission given to the Church by Jesus Christ is to make people from all nations the disciples of Christ (Mathew 28:16–20). The Church must fulfil this commission by providing abundance of life to believers, as Jesus Christ proclaimed in John 10:10b: 'I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly'. Consequently, the Church should be an inclusive community; a community, in which rights and responsibilities are shared by all believers in equal measure.

This paper, therefore, seeks to describe the Church as a welcoming, equal rights family; as an inclusive community in the Rwandan context. It will explore the challenges of church mission facing the Church as an inclusive community and offer recommendations to the Church to enable it to deal with these challenges. It will also concentrate on the mission of the church to reach the people on the margins and recognise the gifts of all in the Church, since all people should have equal rights and responsibilities in the mission to establish the Body of Christ. This paper will look at the positive impacts as well as the shortcomings that must be addressed in order to improve the mission of the Church and the '*Missio Dei*'.

2. The Church's mission to practice equal rights and responsibilities among the members of its community

The Church, at its heart, is a community of equals. Christian equality is grounded in the view of creation as reflecting the image of God and culminating in Jesus'

1 David L. Smith, All God's people: A Theology of the Church, Oregon: Wipe and stock Publisher 2004.

mission and ministry for all. The Church, as the embodiment of Christ, has been called to continue Jesus' ministry of equality[2]. In his ministry, Jesus welcomed all people; he even accepted the sinners in his ministry, while the Pharisees rejected them. One example is Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19:1–10). In addition, God created all human beings in his image: 'So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God, God created them; male and female, God created them' (Gen 1:27). To say that humans are created in the image of God, is to recognise the special qualities of human nature, which allow God to be made manifest in human beings[3]. Therefore, this image of God should be reflected in every member in every Church, in which the Church forms the body of Christ.

The Body of Christ should function in the same manner as the physical body. Paul said that 'just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:12). Thus, the unity and interdependence of the parts of the body is an example of how spiritual gifts build the Church. Wayne Grudem stated that:

> 'The idea that the Holy Spirit unifies the Church is also evident in the fact that "strife… disputes, dissensions, factions" (Gal 5:20) are desires of the flesh that are opposed to being "led by the Spirit" (Gal 5:18, 25). The Holy Spirit is the one who produces love in our hearts (Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22; Col 1:8), and this love "binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is working strongly in a Church to manifest God's presence, one evidence will be a beautiful harmony in the Church community and overflowing love for one another.'[4]

All church members should love and be loved equally and allow all spiritual gifts to work in the Church without discrimination. In addition, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:22–25: 'those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other'. This means that all parts of the body are cared for by the person concerned; even the weak parts are honoured and protected. This is how all people

2 Carolyn Custis James, Lost women of the Bible, Zondervan 2005.

3 Pete Enns, What does 'image of God' mean, 27 July 2010, https://biologos.org/articles/what-does-image-of-god-mean.

4 Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine, Leicester 1994, p. 647.

in the Church should be recognised, and the weak, especially, must be treated carefully and honourably; so that all Church members have equal rights.

The body is also important. When the Church is functioning at its best, each of its members has work to do, so that, like the human body, it can function effectively and efficiently. Accordingly, each member is vital to the functioning of a healthy church. The body is made up of many parts. As is the Church. We, therefore, have a responsibility to each member of the Church, just as we have a responsibility to our body, to care for it and keep it as healthy as possible[5]. Unfortunately, in the Church, some parts are rejected or neglected. For instance, in some denominations in Rwanda, poor Christians are not considered to be important parts of, and have no voice in, their church's activities. This means that their gifts, which could play a significant role in building 'Church', are also buried.

In addition, in most of our churches, we tend to categorise or classify people on the basis of their prominent outward characteristics: skin colour, ethnic origin, social class, education, gender, sexual orientation, income and political views. We often put people in boxes on the basis of these characteristics and make generalised assumptions about them. We are, then, inclined to rank them according to a hierarchy ranging from 'good' to 'bad', 'desirable' to 'undesirable', 'acceptable' to 'unacceptable', 'worthy of inclusion' to 'exclusion'[6]. On the basis of this ranking, the Church would forfeit its claim to be the Body of Christ and the embodiment of the Gospel. The Church of Christ has to accept that we are all the children of God and have equal rights in God's family. As Paul said, 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28).

Furthermore, patriarchal systems of dominations are still in place, especially in the Church. Most often, it is male heterosexuals, who make the rules and decisions about who is 'in' and who is 'out', who can lead and who cannot[7]. The more conservative churches have long treated women as second-class citizens, refusing to ordain them or let them serve in key leadership capacities. The arguments used often include the claim that Jesus only called men to be his disciples and that St Paul advised that women should be subordinate to men and remain silent in church. But Jesus raised women to a position of equality in his social interac-

5 Robert L. Saucey, The Church in God's Program, Chicago: Moody Publishers 1972.

6 Teresa Stanton Collet, Independence or Interdependence? A Christian Response to Liberal Feminists, in: Angela C. Carmella (ed.), Christian Perspectives on Legal Thought, New Haven: Yale University Press 2001, p. 178.

7 Michael Hilton / Gordon Marshall, The Gospel & Rabbinic Judaism: A study Guide, Eugene, OR 1988, p. 128.

tions[8] and Paul declared that in Christ there was no longer a distinction between male and female. The old distinctions had been eliminated by the example of Jesus[9]. Surprisingly enough, even in those churches that have fully accepted women as leaders, patriarchal attitudes still have the upper hand in the continuing struggle between inclusion and exclusion, continuing to uphold the view that women should keep silent and are certainly not strong enough to lead the community[10].

Moreover, Jesus' positive view of women is conspicuously consistent throughout all four Gospels. He treated women as equals and definitely not as sex objects or as personal or legal possessions. Jesus considered women worthy of being part of his circle. He conferred equal dignity and personhood on women in a culture and at a time, in which they were not considered worthy[11]. He presented educational opportunities to women, referring to 'choosing the better part' and commissioned them as credible witnesses at a time, when women were not legally recognised as legitimate witnesses in court or in relation to any other matter. He trusted women with the good news of his resurrection and they offered testimony of his identity to an entire village[12], crossed cultural boundaries – the taboo line of Jews – in transforming women's lives. In one simple encounter with a Samaritan woman, Jesus' respect for her, irrespective of her gender, religion or marital status, transformed people's lives.

3. The mission of the Church to reach those on the margins

The great commission of the Church is to make disciples of Christ in every nation and to teach them to observe what he commanded them (Matthew 28:19–20). This formulation, 'every nation' or 'all nations' is exceptionally inclusive. No one is excluded. Edward Dayton argued:

> 'Every Christian in every local church, in every country of the world, is called upon to be witness to the serving power of Jesus Christ. No matter who we are and where we are, if we claim Jesus as Lord, God's good intention for us is that we should proclaim our faith by what we say and how we live. And if the world is to be evangelized, if every person in the world is to have an opportunity to know Jesus Christ, then this special ambas

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Carolyn Custis James, Lost women of the Bible, Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2005.
12 J. Lyle Story, Jesus' affirmation of women (2008).

sador, these cross-cultural missionaries, need to understand the people, to whom they are called.'[13]

The world often tends to see the margins as a place of disgrace and powerlessness, but the Bible witnesses that God is always present in the struggles of those unjustly pushed to the margins of society. We have many examples in the Bible, which show that God is always with the marginalised people, and hears and responds to their cry. One of these examples is the story of Haggai in Gen 21:8–21. When this woman thought that she was alone and about to die, God heard the cry of her son and rescued them.

For this reason, the Church should recognise that the people on the margins are also loved and cared for by God, and are also made in the image of God. The practice of Jesus has much to say about the content of mission today. Jesus did not isolate anyone, and he was very much concerned with the marginalised. For instance, in Matthew 8:1–3 he dared to stretch out his hand to touch the leper and heal him. In Jewish culture, lepers were marginalised, even rejected; they were not even allowed to come to the gatherings. They lived outside the city[14]. But Jesus welcomed the leper. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God by preaching, teaching, healing people and welcoming the marginalised and the excluded.[15]

The mission of Jesus Christ was based on Isaiah 61:1–3, something he proclaimed in the synagogue (Luke 4:21). It is Jesus, himself, who said that his mission was to preach the good news to the poor, bring liberty to the captives, set free those who are oppressed, recover the sight to the blind and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Thus, since the mission of the Church is based on the teachings and active ministry of Jesus Christ, Bosch said that the transforming mission, as the framework, through which the Church engages in mission, should be carried out on the margins.[16]

Reaching out to the margins requires the strategies of going out to where the marginalised are, to meet them there and encourage them to participate in the Church's ministry. The Church should remember that people on the margins are not only there to be served; they, too, can serve. Most of the time, people in need or on the margins are regarded as the objects or recipients of diakonia. But, ac-

13 Dayton R. Edward, To reach the unreached, in: Ralph D. Winter (ed.), Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader, Pasadena: William Carey Publishing 1983, p. 581.
14 Myrick C. Shinall Jr., The social condition of Lepers in the gospels, in: JBL 137/4 (2018), p. 915–934.
15 Donald A McGavran, Salvation today, in: Ralph Winter (ed.), The Evangelical Response to Bangkok, Pasadena: William Carey Library 1973.
16 David J. Bosch, Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of Mission, New York: Orbis Books 1991.

cording to the World Council of Churches (WCC), even if they lack the material or financial resources to perform diakonia or engage in other works carried out by many churches, the marginalised are still engaged in diakonia: they are practising diakonia through their own lives and their day-to-day resistance. They are testifying to the sinfulness of the world, holding it accountable for its complicity and silence. That is why God opts for the marginalised people: not because they are weak by choice, or on the grounds of paternalistic compassion, but primarily because their lives point towards the urgent need of social transformation[17].

Thus, in encountering people on the margins, the Church can help them discover that they are also called to serve and participate in the mission of God. One can ask: can God use the marginalised in his ministry? Yes, he can. In 1 Kings 17:9–16, Elijah went to the widow of Zarephath to seek help; and it was God, who commanded Elijah to go there, saying that the widow would support him. First of all, Elijah was a privileged prophet in Israel. Secondly, in Jewish culture, it was the 'widow', who was marginalised. Even though she was about to die of hunger because she had almost nothing left to eat, she stepped out to help Elijah, and he helped her discover that she still had the power to survive and serve the people of God.

Let us also consider the Samaritan woman. Jesus made her a disciple and missionary. The Samaritans were marginalised by the Jews. In Jewish tradition, relationships with Samaritans were prohibited, even conversations with them[18]. To the surprise of the disciples, they saw Jesus in deep conversation with the Samaritan woman, the so called 'prostitute woman'. But the conversation transformed her into a missionary; she called others to hear the word of Christ. For this, the Church has to adopt this strategy of reaching out to where people are on the margins and helping them discover the great talent they have as servants of God and as participants in the mission of God.

Consequently, God can use the people on the margins in many ways; although the Church, traditions and cultures seem to neglect them, they are of great value in the mission of God. They are also one of the many parts of the Body of Christ and, as noted above, they can participate in God's mission to save his people. Thus, the marginalised and the neglected can serve the Lord and contribute to the mission of God.

17 Cf. WCC, Theological perspective of diakonia in 21st century, in Colombia, Sri Lanka, 2–6 June 2012.

18 Thomas Nelson, The word in life study Bible: The New Testament edition, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher 1993, p. 340–341.

4. Challenges of Church mission in the Rwandan context

The Church, as inclusive community, should be a place, where people are called and sent to serve all in love. Unfortunately, reality often works the other way round. Instead of demonstrating the power of love brought by Jesus Christ to believers, Church authorities love power and want to be served by those in most need. The Church should be a place that welcomes believers with their questions and encourage their thoughts and reflections unconditionally. For the Church to be an inclusive community it has to be passionate about Jesus Christ's holistic mission in transforming the community. Following Jesus is more a matter of spiritual values than spiritual rules. Following Jesus is not a part of life; it is a way of life[19]. One challenge confronting contemporary Church mission, is the fact that Christians are experiencing social injustice, discrimination and exclusion within the Church. In the context of the Rwandan Church, some Christians on the margins are excluded in its ministry, some spiritual gifts are not recognised, and some Christians receive more recognition than others because of their material possessions or their offerings to the Church.

In reality, the Church in Rwanda is more dominant than other religions, since over 90 per cent of the population are Christian[20]. The Church in Rwanda has different denominations with diverse traditions and doctrines[21]. But the Church still has the common task of fulfilling the mission to bring people to Christ. The challenge of this mission for the Church is the struggle to address injustice within the Church, where some Christians experience discrimination and exclusion as part of this mission, through being neglected or ignored[22]. These are mainly Christians on the margins: the poor, people with disabilities, children and women. They are largely rejected, regarded as having no important role to play in the work of the Church. For example, the poor have no voice in the Church, mainly because they have no money or possessions to offer it or to contribute to its activities. The little work they do is often overlooked[23]. I have heard the testimony of one Christian in a church I will not

19 Hwa-Young Chong, Church: An egalitarian and inclusive community, https://www.emergingmethodism.com/new-article/church-an-egalitarian-and-inclusive-community?lo cale=en.

20 NISR, Fourth population and housing census, Rwanda 2012, thematic report: Social cultural characteristics of population.

21 Gerard Van't-Spijker, Eglise de reveil: Defies messianiques et eschatologique, Goma: EDUPC 2012.

22 Brian Lennon, Injustice in the Church, in: The Furrow 64/4 (2013), p. 208–215.

23 Anne Peterson, the most overlooked people in your church (2019), https://www.crosswalk.com/slideshows/the-10-most-overlooked-people-in-your-church.html [Accessed January 29, 2021].

identify here. She is a poor widow but one of the best preachers I have ever known. But her church will not give her the opportunity to preach during Sunday worship because 'she does not look good', even though she used to preach in small prayer groups.

Most of the time, it is the rich people, who have a voice in the Church, because they use their material assets to support church activities. This enables them to be regarded as the only 'good Christians', while their bad behaviour is often covered up and not viewed as bringing shame upon the Church, since they are, otherwise, great workers for, and contributors to, the Church. Here is one typical example: in one parish, one of the church elders is a businessman. He has a concubine, but the parish's spiritual committee have decided not to interfere, because they are unable to change his behaviour[24]. They know that if they were to discipline him, the parish would lose his contribution to the Church's activities.

Moreover, Heuer stated that some works in the church are useless or unnecessary[25]. This can be true, since the spiritual gifts of the poor are sometimes not valued or accepted, simply because they are operating at a 'low level'. The outcome is that they remain voiceless. People with disabilities are generally rejected and looked upon as not being of any use to the Church or society. In many churches, children and women have limited importance. Most of the time, their gifts and works are unnoticed or not appreciated. With regard to the women's position in the Church, their ordination in many churches remains an issue. Even where women have been ordained, women clergy are regarded as weak and often have no opportunity to fill leading church positions[26].

5. Conclusion

In summary, since *Missio Dei* is an inclusive mission, it is the will of God that we should all participate in his mission equally and respectfully. The Church should work as a family that treats all children equally, so that each family member feels the obligation to participate in God's mission. The fruits of this united mission will bring people to Christ, as Jesus said, 'In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven' (Mt 5:16). The Church cannot be the salt of earth if, at the same time, it continues to exclude and discriminate against some of its parts.

24 The report from the spiritual committee of one of the parishes in my church, 2020.
25 Quinet Obed Niyikiza, Participative Educational in Diaconal Ministry: Challenges Involved in Christian Identity, in: Protestant University of Rwanda (ed.), Diaconia in Protestant Churches in Rwanda (PUR series publications Issue no. 9), Kigali 2017, p. 43.
26 George Vescey, Women's ordination grows as a major religious issue, New York 1978, p. 26.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations to the Church

1. The Church should recognise that we are all children of God and created equally; thus, each person's gifts and abilities must be recognised and they should be welcomed to participate in the activities of the Church.
2. Church leaders have a responsibility to teach Church members about inclusiveness in *Missio Dei*.
3. Church leaders need to welcome everyone into the Church as part of its family and avoid any form of favouritism.
4. Every Christian need to recognize his/her gift and use it to build the kingdom of God
5. All Christians should accept and welcome others as Christ welcomed every one
6. The church leaders have the responsibility to help Christians to discover their gift and to use them for the glory of God
7. Christians need to recognize that everyone in the church is the part of the body of Christ, thus they have equal right in the mission of God
8. The church should welcome marginalized people and welcome them in the church
9. The church should empower people in the margins for the mission of God, because there are on the body of Christ
10. The inclusion should be the key concept for the work of the church where everyone feels the as her/his home.

Recommendations to the UEM Communion

Since the UEM is, indeed, a united mission community, it should extend its horizons by empowering people on the margins, such as women and people with disabilities.

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BUILDING NETWORKS AGAINST EXCLUSION AND RACISM

The Perspective of a Nigerian Woman Studying in Germany

Sarah Elomese Oboh

1. Introduction

An inclusive community or society would be one, in which every member feels genuinely a part of and recognised. An inclusive society is one that promotes solidarity and continuously rejects all forms of social exclusion.

The need to build inclusive communities arises directly from the human condition, the harmless, natural diversity that exists amongst the inhabitants of the earth, cultural and physical, which has been exploited by patriarchy, slavery and colonialism/imperialism. Since the rise of globalisation, however, the need to move has become even more pronounced, by people looking to find safety from religious or political persecution, wars, natural disasters or just people with the legitimate desire to make better lives for themselves in more developed foreign lands. Understandably perhaps, the citizens of such foreign lands may harbour resentment towards such outsiders, regardless of the logic or illogic of such resentments. Such resentments are usually born out of the belief that foreigners are either inferior or consume resources that would otherwise have gone to them. Such resentments are often given expression through discrimination and violence targeted at foreigners. Although it remains the most talked about aspect of the lack of inclusion in Western societies today and the focus of this essay, issues of discrimination surrounding sexual orientation/identity, faith, disability, language, poverty, gender and certain illnesses are a big part of the problem that needs to be addressed in order to build truly inclusive communities.

Within my present context as a Nigerian studying in Germany, I must say that racism, racial discrimination and the language barrier are the three main challenges I am facing. I consider them serious challenges that must be tackled if inclusiveness is to be achieved in German society, especially by the Church. I will also try to highlight some of the challenges I perceive that the Church, as a body, faces from my experience as a member of a church here in Germany.[1]

1 Grace Outreach International Christian Center, Bochum, Germany.

I must confess that I have experienced exclusion, without racism being a factor in the unhappy situation. Poverty I have found, can be a great excluder. As one of five children growing up with a single parent, with two sick siblings, I saw how poverty can exclude people from a community, where no effort is made to foster inclusion. My two sick siblings died, ultimately because we had very limited access to healthcare. I have always wondered how differently things would have turned out, if someone, anyone, had made efforts to address our challenge, so I would like here to express my gratitude and admiration for the effort this essay competition represents.

Every single issue that stands against inclusiveness must be addressed (for individuals and for the Church as a body) as a matter of both public policy and ethics. But the very nature of these issues makes them difficult for public policy to address. Public policy may prohibit and punish certain acts and even utterances and, indeed, they do, but the issues are better addressed through persuasion and reason than with the force of law, because law enforcers are not immune to the feeling of resentment towards 'the others'. Therefore, a significant portion of the work against discrimination, exclusion and the violence thereof must fall to those who can employ compassion in dealing with the problem, for instance, churches.

2. The problems for the individual

Living in Germany has been a mixed bag. On the one hand, and considering the society I come from[2], the orderliness and efficiency of public services and utilities in Germany[3] is wonderful, with social security, universal health care and tuition free university education; everything works, which for someone coming from the dysfunction of Nigerian society is a truly beautiful thing to behold and experience. On the other hand, issues of racism, discrimination and the language barrier have presented quite shocking experiences for me. The out-dated colonial stereotype of Africans as savages seems to be very much alive in the minds of many Germans I have encountered, which is shocking, given the effects of globalisation and the technology-fuelled integration of the world today. I do not make this assertion lightly, but I have been asked by a German whether I have ever seen rainfall? This type of question, from one human being to another – an adult 'earthling' – speaks of a certain, mind-set; one of profound disrespect,

2 According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2020, Nigeria ranked 161 on the Human Development Index with a poverty rate of 46.4%

3 According to the UNDP, in 2020, Germany ranked 6 on the Human Development Index.

to say the least. It is impossible to ascribe such a question to ignorance. This type of problem can be seen as a good example of how institutionalised forms of racism can affect everyday interactions. The problem arises from a lack of identity recognition or even miscommunication either way, one that can be solved if society develops a sense of recognition or 'double consciousness'.[4]

Although race is signified by physical attributes, it is basically a social kind rather than a natural kind. European philosophers have played a huge role in creating that social reality, which still pervades not just Germany but all of Europe today. It is for this reason that it has been suggested that racism is baked into much of Western philosophy.[5] Even more recently, conservative thinkers like Roger Scruton still did their best to defend traditional hierarchies as natural and inescapable.[6] They are not! I do not believe that any system or hierarchy that leaves a large number of people at a marked disadvantage can be considered part of the natural order.

As a black student in Germany, I have encountered discrimination and outright racism on an almost daily basis. Although I am grateful to God that I have not yet experienced physical violence, hardly a day goes by without an incident to remind me, sometimes starkly, that I may be an unwanted presence in Germany. However, one specific incident left me trembling with fear for my safety. About a year ago, I was on a train from Düsseldorf to Bochum, when a fellow commuter verbally assaulted me, repeatedly calling me the N-word and telling me to go back to my country. I was petrified by the relentlessness of his rage against me. Unfortunately, there were no security personnel around to protect me, and it was too dark to risk getting off before my stop, as I had no idea what I would encounter wherever I decided to get off to get away from an attack. To make matters worse, there was a group of young men sitting nearby the whole time, giggling and laughing. Not one of them intervened on my behalf; instead, they apparently had a great time. All I could do was pray that the attack did not progress to a physical one. It was an unforgettable experience, one that left a mental scar.

4 Anne Warfield Rawls / Waverly Duck, Tacit Racism, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2020.

5 Ibid.

6 Matt McManus, Conservatives Are Wrong: There's Nothing Natural about Hierarchy, in: Jacobin Magazine 43 (2021), http://jacobinmag.com/2021/11/conservative-political-theory-roger-scruton-hierarchies-authorith/.

3. The problems for the Church

Apart from my own daily personal experiences, as one of the co-ordinators of my church's Summer Youth Camp, I have had the unwanted privilege of hearing of similar experiences of discrimination and racist attacks from the young people (children of African migrants) that I interact with. They have shared their difficult school experiences with me, where some have been openly called the N-word by their peers. Most of them talk about how they are constantly being body shamed for their African features, for instance their hair being called 'mops' or their skin being referred to as dirty. There is no way to expect such young people to grow up feeling part of German society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they may well grow up thinking of their existence in German society as an inconvenience to Germans.

This reflects the main challenge of the Church: the lack of a sense of belonging. This is reflected in the difficulty in networking with other churches and each one feels isolated. This, in itself, is a major challenge, as it presents a sense of 'being alone', meaning that the Church feels alone in its challenges. There is no overstating the fact that the result of this is a sense of helplessness. By implication, this sense of isolation and inability to connect, for example with other churches, places a huge burden on the churches and makes it almost impossible for them to help themselves let alone their members. For clarity, I will break down the problems and possible solutions into three parts: missiological, ecclesiological and ethical.

3.1 Missiological challenges

There are five missiological challenges[7]: urbanisation, world unemployment, hunger, AIDS and the relevance of the Christian faith. Most of these challenges result from urbanisation and globalisation; in this regard, two sides of a coin. This is relevant to the mission of the Church, because, as I mentioned above, those who migrate from one place to another are usually moving away from something, towards something. This move is accompanied by a disconnection from their local ties. This move to urban areas also creates the twin problems of unemployment and poverty[8], both of which lead to world hunger. The question that comes to mind is: what does world hunger have to do with the Body of Christ? The Bible urges us to feed the hungry[9], this is the example that Christ

7 Delia Nuesh-Oliver, Missiological Challenges in the Twenty-first Century (2006), https://missionexus.org/missiological-challenges-in-the-twenty-first-century/.

8 The Associated Press reported in 2002.

9 Mathew 6:11, Proverbs 14:31, Mathew 25:35 (New International Version).

has shown us in the Bible.[10] This example, like others, is something the Church ought to follow. Besides, how can the Church possibly feed the soul if the body is hungry? The rate that diseases such as HIV/AIDS are spreading is also a major challenge confronting the Church in terms of inclusion, because, like most of these diseases, it is accompanied by stigmatisation. This poses a challenge, also to the Church because, as the body of Christ, the Church is expected to also care for those affected by these diseases. The last of these missiological challenges is that the relevance of Christian faith also has to be recognised, in the sense that the Church must reaffirm its position and influence in the present scheme of things, by effectively addressing these challenges and by going back to what is expected of the Church despite globalisation and all the changes it has brought.

3.2 Ecclesiological problem

As Christians, there are many ecclesiological questions, which we already ask ourselves in our daily lives and this often leads to confusion and even contradictions within the faith. Such questions as, 'Should my child be baptised as a baby or should I let her grow up and decide for herself if she want to be baptised? Is it really my duty to pay my tithe to the church?' It is not uncommon to hear the diverse denominations offering different, almost contrasting, views on some of the most important day-to-day issues facing Christians. The effect of these differences is division within Christendom. To solve this problem, which I call 'division within the faith', it is important for the Church to come to a convergence, built on the common knowledge of faith in Christ and recognise the different denominations as one body in Christ.

3.3 Ethical problems

The main ethical problem of the Church is the problem of racism and discrimination. The problem today may be referred to as one of the legacies of the brutal subjugation of Africa and the atrocities committed against Africans by Europeans through slavery and colonialism, as well as the intellectual foundation for racism and discrimination laid by some of the most highly regarded European philosophers, Germans included: Immanuel Kant, for instance, who posited that there could be nothing good about black Africans, whom he considered as lacking a 'drive to activity', which indicated a lack of mental capacities to be self-motivated and successful in northern climates[11]; or Martin Heidegger and his

10 Mathew 14:13–21 (New International Version).

11 Pauline Kleingeld, Kant's Second Thoughts on Race, in: The Philosophical Quarterly 57/229 (2007), p. 573–592.

support for the race-based ideology of the National Socialists. The list includes Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who has been described as 'an explicit racist.'

However, the story, for me and my experiences, is not all gloom. In my time in Germany – a little more than three years now – I have met the most amazing people; so far, I have had very cordial neighbours and made friends with a lot of Germans, who have shown me the utmost respect and cordiality. I have also been delighted to note that, in some cases, their interactions with me have visibly changed their views and attitudes about Africans and migrants, although I have had to endure questions like the silly one about rainfall. Nonetheless, I have been left wondering how they have been able to hold on to such archaic and blatantly racist notions about Africans, even in the 21st century of free access to information and global connectivity. Also, there are, I am sure, very many Germans who are not discriminatory towards people like me and who do object, when others display attitudes of racial bias and discrimination, such as the solitary woman on the train ride to Bochum who remonstrated with the man harassing me.

4. The role of churches

To tackle all these challenges, it is vital that the Church develops 'strategies for reaching the world's urban areas for Christ.' This requires a different approach, which 'cannot be based on the same methodologies or approaches that may or may not have worked elsewhere in other times. To reach the world's cities for Christ we will have to rediscover, develop and make known theologies of urban mission that touch people where they live and where they hurt. Our strategies must be holistic and relevant. They must direct the Gospel and transformational ministries toward the most urgent social and economic challenges.'[12] In essence, the Church must constantly update itself with the growing dynamics of globalisation in order to serve.

In considering the role of churches in building inclusive communities by standing against discrimination, exclusion and violence, it is important to first consider the position of churches in such communities. How influential are churches today in shaping public opinion or promoting moral uprightness or even deciding what is morally good? Where do churches and churchgoers stand? Are they on the left, on the right or in the middle of the political spectrum? Are churches willing to downplay aspects of the scripture that possibly promote discrimination against certain minorities, such as the LGBT community?

12 Ibid.

The role and influence of the Church (or churches) in the West as a whole has been steadily declining, along with the number of people who identify as Christians. Currently, around one third of the people in Germany are atheists. In Eastern Germany, there is a peculiar case of extremely high irreligiousness, where one study could not find a single person under the age of 28 who believed in the existence of God.[13] According to a 2017 Pew Research Centre survey of religious beliefs and practices in Western Europe, 'the majority of Europe's Christians are non-practicing, but they differ from religiously unaffiliated people in their views on God, attitudes towards Muslims and immigrants and opinions about religion's role in society.' The report goes further to say that 'Western Europe, where Protestant Christianity originated and Catholicism has been based for most of its history, has become one of the world's most secular regions. Although the vast majority of adults say they were baptised, today many do not describe themselves as Christians. Some say they gradually drifted away from religion, stopped believing in religious teachings or were alienated by scandals or church positions on social issues.'[14] The question quickly comes to mind, 'What positions on social issues might alienate Christians from the Church?'

Sadly, some of the available empirical data shows a worrying trend, a trend that suggests that the churches are bastions of 'conservatism'. According to the Pew report referred to earlier, the following assertions are true:

- Non-practicing Christians are less likely than church-attending Christians to express nationalist views.
- Christian identity in Western Europe is associated with higher levels of negative sentiment toward immigrants and religious minorities.
- Anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish opinions are more common among Christians, at all levels of practice, than they are among Western Europeans with no religious affiliation.

While these assertions are by no means absolute, Christianity appears to provide a refuge for discriminators. One is compelled to ask if such negative views or opinions about immigrants should be found at all amongst Christians? Are churches in any way fit to talk about fighting exclusion, discrimination and violence if their members are the most likely to discriminate?

Thankfully, Holy Scripture is replete with explicit pronouncements about the oneness of mankind before God, the universality of the love of Christ and his

13 Peter Thomson, Eastern Germany: The Most Godless Place on Earth, in: The Guardian, September 2012. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2012/sep/22/atheism-east-germany-godless-place.

14 Pew Research Centre, Being Christian in Western Europe, https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/.

command to love all. Verses such as: "*A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*" (John 13:34); "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 3:28); "*Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them*'" (Genesis 1:26–27).

Clearly, discrimination, exclusion and violence should not find solace in the hearts of Christians. Unlike issues of discrimination based on sexual orientation and related matters, where the Church is still struggling to reconcile the scripture with the reality of today's western society, the Church suffers no such handicap when it comes to racial discrimination, exclusion and violence. The role of the Church in building inclusive communities and taking a consistent stand against the discrimination people like me face is clear and should include the following:

- Preach with unwavering commitment to the Gospel of one humanity under God's love.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards clergy and/or laymen who display discriminatory behaviour towards foreigners or migrants.
- Establish language programmes designed to help migrants learn German.
- Provide emotional support for people, who suffer acts of discrimination.
- Teach minorities/migrants how to act or what to do when confronted with situations of potentially dangerous discriminatory acts.
- Engage in continuous effort to build networks and avenues for encounters between different groups and church denominations.
- Continuously provide its members with platforms to forge integration and a sense of belonging.
- Provide networks for discussions on the challenges faced by the Church.

5. Conclusion

Exclusion, for whatever reason, that keeps some of us on the fringes of societies and communities, is part of the existing social order, but 'our social order is the product of human decisions – and it can be remade to benefit the many rather than the few.'[15] If churches would lead the way in this remaking, ready to unite,

15 McManus, Conservatives Are Wrong.

ready to let some of their out-dated doctrines (and ideologies) fade away, then a new society might emerge along with a remade Church. The Church must remake itself, first and foremost to stop being a sanctuary for discriminators under any guise. If the Church remains attached and faithful to traditional doctrines, then its fate is to continue shrinking, both in size and relevance until it is well and truly left behind by modern society. Ironically, it looks as if the last group of people, who will remain within the warmth of the Christian faith are Africans, so it is shocking to come to Christian Europe and suffer such horrendous discrimination from 'brothers and sisters in Christ'.

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THE CHURCH'S STRUGGLE TO BUILD JUSTICE FOR ALL

The Context of Multidimensional Poverty in North Sumatra, Indonesia

Jordan H. Pakpahan

1. Introduction

The problem of poverty in North Sumatra is multidimensional. Poverty has economic causes such as a free-market economy that is not conducive to the birth of a small-scale creative economy, as well as the low income of workers and peasants. But it also has other causes that can be traced to the political tendencies of local governments to be pro-company and on the side of local business entrepreneurs, who are unfriendly to the poor. Consequently, the economic and social inequality that are problems of poverty, can be regarded as a result of an absent or ignored state. Similarly, local companies and business leaders, who are highly oriented towards business and profit-making, often turn the poor and the environment into objects they can manipulate. Many poor people live on the margins in different remote areas in North Sumatra, with no proper access to development, education and a good quality of life. Deforestation by industrial and timber corporations in various parts of North Sumatra leads to the destruction of the environmental ecosystems, in which people live, and the community's right to live from forested areas.

2. Multidimensional poverty

It is appropriate, today, to measure the reality and level of poverty that is not based on a monetary approach. Poverty is usually measured in terms of daily income. 'Severe poverty', according to the Millennium Development Goals, refers to those earning less than $1.25 per day or about Rp 20,000. Those earning around Rp 50,000 per day are categorised as being above the poverty line. But this is simply not true. People with an income of Rp 50,000 per day are still

considered relatively vulnerable to falling into poverty, since their situation is constantly reliant on the dynamics and fluctuations of the regional economy and political conditions. Other issues that must be considered include the depth of poverty and its severity, which are not separate from inequality. The large disparities in Indonesia are evident in the situation between individuals, between groups of people and between regions. Alongside the problem of the low income of the poor, other problems include high levels of malnutrition, high maternal mortality ratios (number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), the low level of formal education received by most of the population, difficulties in accessing clean water and acute sanitation problems.[1]

Poverty needs to be looked at from a different perspective from the normal. Poverty is closely linked to marginality. Those living on or below the poverty line can also be called the 'marginalised', those 'on the margins or on the edge' (of territory, policy, prosperity, etc.).[2] The marginalised are deprived of access to natural resources and opportunities, freedom of choice and the development of personal capabilities. They are excluded not only from growth but also from the dimensions of social progress and other developments. Marginality is the forced position and condition of an individual or group on the fringes of a biophysical, ecological, economic, political and social system, which prevents them from gaining access to natural resources, assets, services, guaranteed freedom of choice, hinders the development of capabilities and ultimately leads to severe poverty.[3] Palash Kamruzzaman[4] revealed that poverty is no longer understood solely as absolute poverty and relative poverty, but also includes the issue of disability due to social, psychological and economic deprivation, and even includes the failure of political parties to take appropriate measures to address poverty and the needs of the poor. The aim of this approach is to encourage efforts to directly listen to the cries of the poor that are rarely heard.

1 Awalil Rizky / Nasyith Majidi, Neoliberalisme Mencengkeram Indonesia, Jakaarta: E Publishing Company 2008, p. 196, 202.

2 Joachim von Braun / Franz W. Gatzweiler, Marginality – An Overview and Implications for Policy Marginality, in: Joachim von Braun / Franz W. Gatzweiler (ed.), Addressing the Nexus of Poverty, Exclusion and Ecology, Heidelberg: Springer 2014, p. 3.

3 Von Braun / Gatzweiler, Marginality, p. 3.

4 Palash Kamruzzaman, Dollarisation of Poverty: Rethinking Poverty Beyond 2015, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2015, p. 9–15.

3. North Sumatera in the turbulence of the global economy

North Sumatra, as an integral part of Indonesia, is certainly affected by the global economy, which includes the integration of capital markets and markets for goods and services, migration agreements and cultural exchanges or a combination of these. According to Dodi Mantra's analysis, neoliberalism is the spirit that forms the basis of the philosophy underlying the formation of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN). The economic development paradigm of neoliberalism assumes that market entities are the most relevant, effective actors in determining the success of economic development within a country. In the economic development paradigm of neoliberalism, international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO play a significant role, even tending towards the hegemonic. The late 1990s crisis that hit Asian countries is a clear manifestation of the failure of the market as an entity glorified by supporters of liberalism.[5] According to what I have observed, North Sumatra faces obstacles in dealing with ASEAN regional co-operation, such as the provision of human resources, capital, infrastructure and markets. In addition, provincial governance, held hostage by corruption and collusion, is a major obstacle to realising development in a just and equitable manner in various districts and cities, especially in peripheral and remote areas. A corrupt government will find it difficult to create conducive conditions for the creation of a small or medium-scale creative economy, both in rural and urban areas. I also believe this corruption and failure contribute to the perpetuation of poverty in North Sumatra.

Ann Harrison says that many studies examining how globalisation may be linked to increasing inequality have found that the utility of trade does not always benefit the poor and trade reforms in non-skilled countries certainly do not. The poor will benefit from globalisation when the regions, in which they live and work, initiate complementary supportive policies.[6] J.B. Banawiratma[7] says that Indonesia's entry into the AEC gave rise to the multi-layered network of liberal capitalism at national, regional and global levels; a system, in which smallholder farmers always lose out. Their lives do not change for the better since they are powerless to liberate themselves from the web of injustice that surrounds them. There is also inequality of infrastructural development in vari-

5 Dodi Mantra, Hegemoni dan Diskursus Neoliberalisme: Menelusurui Langkah Indonesia Menuju Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN 2015, Bekasi: Mantra Press 2011, p. 1, 56–58, 83–84.

6 Ann Harrison, Globalization and Poverty: An Introduction, in: Ann Harrison (ed.), Globalization and Poverty, London/Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 3–4.

7 J.B. Banawiratma, Petruk dan Mea: Lakon Liberatif, Kanisius, Yogyakarta 2017, p. 35–38.

ous regions in North Sumatra. On the peripheries of the region, remote rural communities that are already poor are unlikely to benefit from development and modernisation programmes: the poor infrastructure of roads connecting villages to one another and to the city make it difficult for the rural population to increase their economic activity.[8]

4. Political power and corruption as drivers of poverty

The fall of Suharto in 1998, which marked the end of the authoritarian regime, paved the way for a new post-Suharto era called the *Reformasi* era. This reform era witnessed a resurgence of political parties, the birth of good electoral laws as well as legal and institutional reforms of governance and the market. Indonesian democracy also gave birth to what is called 'good governance' under democratic and accountable government, which corresponds to the transition to an economy based on free market governance and the rule of law.[9] Even so, the strong influence of the authoritarian New Order regime, which was riddled with corruption, actually influenced the formation of new economic and political regimes in the regions. The most important and prominent powers raised under the New Order were incubated in the reform era and formed a new framework of governance, which perpetuated new alliances in a more fluid and democratic political environment. The era changed but the generation accustomed to the corrupt culture in the New Order era did not change. They could hold permanent control of power both in the executive and in the legislature, also in the province of North Sumatra.

Since 1998, the financial decentralisation programme that transferred financial facilities from central government to the provinces (local governments) has left many public and administrative services in the hands of local officials. Central government only has the authority to make policies, to supervise and control the regions. This means that development in the provinces is entirely in the hands of local officials in the provinces, districts and sub-districts. Initially, administrative decentralisation and financial governance were considered by many to be capable of answering the problem of corruption and help government produce forms of government that were market friendly, participatory, transparent and accountable. But instead of encouraging broad participatory politics, what actually happened was that the decentralisation of power led to

8 Seri Analisis Pembangunan Wilayah Provinsi Sumatera Utara tahun 2015, p. 34.

9 Vedi R. Hadiz, Corruption and Neo-liberal Reform: Markets and Predatory Power in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, in: Richard Robison (ed.), The Neo-Liberal Revolution Forging the Market State, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2006, p. 79.

an even worse 'decentralisation of corruption' in the regions, giving birth to new and unexpected forms of corruption. Decentralisation has produced local officials who, in political terms, tend to be pro-power. This situation is very evident in North Sumatra. The goals and activities of most political parties are geared to seize power as a means of achieving the maximum interest of the group. According to the Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), North Sumatra Province was one of the 'top 10' provinces in the 2017 Corruption Case list. More than 40 cases of corruption were recorded in North Sumatra Province with state losses amounting to Rp145 billion.[10]

5. Deforestation and poverty

In the district of Tobasa, the presence of the PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) pulp company, formerly known as Indo Rayon, has always been opposed by most of the local Tapanuli people, especially those living in the forested area and its surroundings. However, local indigenous peoples are powerless to stand up to the power of entrepreneurial forces, the government and the local community leaders, who act as their lackeys. TPL has control of not only very vast areas of industrial plantation forest (HTI) concessions, but also uses land and indigenous forest without consideration of socialisation issues, consultation with, or the consent of, the local indigenous people. TPL has also cleared the frankincense *(kemenyan)* forest, which has been a 'customary forest' for the local population. One other violation committed by TPL was the destruction of natural forests, evidence of which was the expansion of its logging activities into protected areas.[11] The company's expansion of industrial plantations has provoked conflicts between communities and companies, between communities, themselves, and is endangering the life of communities.[12] The problem of forest encroachment by companies for the purposes of timber and paper production is linked to a corrupt decentralised system of regional government and local figures who are backing the owners of capital.The handover of power to manage forests from central to local governments has generated complex problems that resulted in huge losses for local communities and enormous damage to the environment. Local governments feel they must secure maximum benefit from forests to establish a suitable posture with regard to the allocation of regional development

10 https://antikorupsi.org>default>files>t [accessed, 4 June 2018].
11 Muhamad Kosar, Peran Perbankan Terhadap Ekspansi Industri dan Hutan Tanaman Industri PT Toba Pulp Lestari yang Menyebabkan Terjadinya Perusakan Lingkungan dan Maraknya Konflik, in: Intip Hutan, December 2015, p. 12.
12 Muhamad Kosar, p. 14.

budgets, but often without sufficient consideration of the environmental and social consequences.[13]

Deforestation and illegal logging activities have led to enormous losses in North Sumatra. Deforestation, caused by the high global market demand for natural resource-based commodities such as timber, palm oil, pulp, mined resources and paper, has encouraged the government to take a reactive, opportunistic attitude by issuing numerous sectoral policies that as well as being solely oriented towards increasing income, are also exploitative and unsustainable. All of this has resulted in increased pressure on Indonesia's natural forests, forest degradation and deforestation.[14] It is clear that the damaging impact of deforestation and illegal logging in North Sumatra has triggered the process of impoverishment of the people living in and from the forest. But it also has the potential to activate such natural disasters as flash floods and landslides, lead to the damage and loss of an ecosystem that is home to orangutan species in Sumatra[15], and contribute to global warming and generate financial losses for local governments as a result of the policies of corrupt officials.

6. The Church on the side of justice

Justice is an important aspect of the discussion concerning multidimensional poverty. This multidimensional poverty is linked to economic, social and political issues. At present, the world community is faced with the damaging effects of the economic system of neoliberal capitalism, which include poverty, unemployment, marginalisation, inequality, oppression, low labour wages, high educational and health costs, environmental damage and industrial waste that pollutes rivers, the air and land, as well as religiously and culturally motivated conflicts between groups. It is very important to radically re-interpret Luther's teaching on justification, which is expected to regenerate the concrete praxis of justice in a world that is suffering, oppressed and poor. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda[16] explains that the theological balancing between Luther's two views of righteousness must be maintained, namely between righteousness in the sense of truth

13 Ida Aju Pradnja Resosudarmo, Shifting Power to the Periphery: The Impact of Decentralisation on Forests and Forest People, in: Edward Aspinall / Greg Fealy (ed.), Local Power and Politics in Indonesia, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2003, p. 230–233.
14 Mufti Fathul, et al, Deforestasi tanpa Henti "Potret Deforestasi di Sumatera Utara, Kalimantan Timur dan Maluku Utara, Bogor: Forrest Watch Indonesia 2018, p. 35.
15 Serge Wich, et al, Orangutan dan Ekonomi Pengelolaan Hutan Lestari di Sumatera, UNEP [United Nations Environment Programme], Nairobi 2011, p. 13.
16 Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, Re-Radicalizing Justification, in: Ulrich Duchrow / Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld (eds.), Liberation towards Justice, Münster: LIT VERLAG 2015, p. 239–258.

that God has given us: to love God; and righteousness in the sense of God's justice, which places us in a radical relationship with those around us: to love our neighbour. This kind of justification give us the transformative role and alternative culture to deal with an economic system based on money-interest-money-property that causes ego-centrism, exclusion, capital and profit orientation, the objectification of human beings as a means of production, the results of which are severe poverty and suffering.

'The tyrannical regime of an infinite spirit' of the hegemonic economy of financial capitalism must be uprooted from the life of indigenous people,[17] because it can damage relationships between humans and between humans and the natural environment. Interpersonal relations should not be based on a '*homo oeconomicus*' culture that measures all relations according to profit and financial calculations, which pose a dangerous threat to the survival of humans and the universe.[18] 'The myth of the global market as the only way to save the world'[19] must be resisted by human communities through encouraging the birth of an alternative economic culture that is aware of, and respects, the importance of solidarity and just relations in societies. All religious people must affirm that economic activity cannot be separated from the religious aspect of human life. It is clearly believed that the economy functions to maintain the life of human beings and preserve the universe. The economy therefore benefits all life. But such an economy is only possible if the values and principles of religions with respect to human nature – as both transcendent and immanent – are developed in a balanced manner.[20] We believe that our God is the God of Liberation, who restores and reconciles damaged relations between humans. But he is also God of Israel – father of Jesus Christ – who opposes the political economy of tyrannical empire.[21] God's justice, in the true sense, is justice, which is relational and has a communal dimension. God's justice is, therefore, a force that protects and builds community. The fellowship of God with his creation, humanity and particularly with his chosen people is embodied in the concept of the Covenant. Flowing from this understanding, it was concluded that God also hopes that all human beings will connect with all of creation, with other people and with their

17 See Daniel C. Beros, Justice by Faith and Eco-Justice, in: Louk Andrianos (ed.), Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth, Wuppertal: Foedus Verlag 2019, p. 91–92.

18 B. Herry-Priyono, Bangsa dalam Tegangan Lokal – Global, in: Diskursus 2/2, Jakarta: STF Driyarkara, 2003, p. 134–135.

19 Ulrich Duchrow / Franz J. Hinkelammert, Transcending Greedy Money. Interreligious Solidarity for Just Relations, New York: Pargrave Macmillan 2012, p. 14, 17.

20 Duchrow / Hinkelammert, Transcending, p. 44–90.

21 Ulrich Duchrow, Political and Economic Wellbeing and Justice: A Global View, in: Studies Christian Ethics Vol.3 No.1, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1990, p. 62–63.

communities in fair and honest relationships, based on respect for each other, and build common rights.[22]

Justice, in the ethics of the common good, contains a liberative element that can be seen in the act of liberating the poor from oppression, injustice, poverty and slavery. And various comprehensive service programmes will reach them effectively, if they are based on a range of critical analyses of, and insights into, the major problems from the perspective and context of the lives of those experiencing these problems in a concrete manner.

7. Concluding remarks

It is crucial to call on all churches in North Sumatra to concern themselves not only with their internal institutional matters and the maintenance of good relations with the government. They should more actively stand up for resistance to the corrupt culture that has penetrated the North Sumatran community. It is the function of the Church, locally and nationally, to constantly demand that the government assume the responsibility of taking the side of the poor, oppressed and marginalised by issuing government policies that promote their welfare and enable them to live in a healthy environment. In the Toba Samosir District, the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) must strengthen its position as a critical and transformative Church struggling constantly on behalf of, and with, the poor. At the same time, the HKBP must protest against the corrupt behaviour of the PT Toba Pulp Lestari company that dehumanise the poor. The Church, the HKBP in particular, should take a critical and transformative position: by always speaking out prophetically on the importance of justice, peace and the integrity of creation; by always criticising government policies that are unfair and detrimental to the poor; and by always assisting and empowering the poor to enable them to rise out of their poverty. The young political candidates, who, in the future, will go on to assume leadership, must receive Christian political education from the Church. In the ecological sector, the Churches in North Sumatra are challenged to answer the problems of environmental degradation and the marginalised communities as victims of the actions of the irresponsible deforestation of timber and paper companies.

22 Ulrich Duchrow /Gerhard Liedke, Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice & Peace, Geneva: WCC Publications 1989, p. 76–79.

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THE CHURCH'S MISSION TO COMBAT INTOLERANCE

Tiarma Siahaan

1. The challenges faced by Christians in Indonesia

Indonesia is a very large nation, with a population of 270.2 million people, as of September 2020.[1] This nation consists of many ethnic groups and six religions in the following proportions: Islam 87.2%, Protestant 6.9%, Catholic 2.9%, Hindu 1.7%, Buddha 0.7% and Confucian 0.05%.[2] This diversity is a precious resource of the Indonesian nation, something that is gratifying and should be appreciated. In Indonesia, diversity is linked to the motto 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika', which, in general, can be interpreted as 'Different but still one'. This is implemented in the five principles of 'Pancasila', including:[3]

1. The Supreme Lord
2. Just and civilised humanity
3. Indonesian unity
4. The citizen led by wisdom in representative deliberations
5. Social justice for all Indonesian people

These Pancasila values have existed since ancient times, but were only legalised on 18th August 1945 by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence or PPKI, which became the basis of the State.[4] The term Pancasila was first articulated by Bung Karno, future President Sukarno; ('bung' = brother, comrade) in his speech on 1st June 1945 to the committee of the Investigator of the Preparatory Efforts for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), when formulating the Basics of an Independent Indonesia, after Indonesia had been immersed in

1 BPS, Badan Pusat Statistik (2020), https://www.bps.go.id/news/2021/01/21/405/bps--270-20-juta-penduduk-indonesia-hasil-sp2020.html [Accessed February 10, 2021].
2 Laman Resmi Republik Indonesia – Portal Informasi Indonesia, https://www.indonesia.go.id/profil/agama [Accessed February 10, 2021].
3 M. Alwi Kaderi, Pendidikan Pancasila Untuk Perguruan Tinggi, Banjar Masin: Antasari Press 2015, p. 8.
4 Ibid., p. 27.

a prolonged colonial process.[5] Pancasila is not only formulated as the basis of the State, it is also a statement of the identity of the Indonesian nation, which is the result of the thoughts and basic ideas of the Indonesian people with regard to a good life. This encapsulates the character and features of Indonesia, which are: a religious nation, respect for other nations and human beings, the existence of unity, mutual co-operation and deliberation, and the idea of social justice.[6] From this formulation it can be understood that the diverse Indonesian nation is united in one ideology, which requires everyone to be tolerant and live a life of mutual respect that transcends the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, class or any other attribute.

Tolerance – one of the goals of the Indonesian nation – has been damaged since the opening of the faucet of political freedom and democracy, which followed the fall of the New Order regime. This period not only provided space for the emergence of different kinds of expression built on primordial sentiments and identities, but also paved the way for the expansion of radicalism.[7]

Radicalism is the result of an intolerant attitude, through which a group of people seeks to bring about massive change while ignoring tolerance. Attitudes of intolerance in Indonesia often come from adherents of radical Islam – for a number of reasons. Firstly, from the belief in holy texts that teach about terrorism based on the word 'jihad'. Secondly, radicalism is also associated with an understanding of the political, economic and legal injustices that operate in a country. A certain political regime and party are considered to be unfair to a specific group of people. Thirdly, radical terrorism occurs because of the perceived unfairness of law enforcement officials, which often make them targets of violence by radical terrorists. Incidents involving the shooting of police officers in several regions in Indonesia, for example, in Poso, Mataram, Solo and Jakarta, are evidence that confirms that the apparatus is deemed to be unfair in enforcing the law. Fourthly, the issue of education, which emphasises aspects of teaching used to indoctrinate and justify violence. This is a problem that is likely to lead to radicalisation because of the ignorance of the perspective of religious education.[8]

Historically, the Indonesian nation has repeatedly experienced outbreaks of religious conflict across several regions of Indonesia. These include the reli-

5 Ibid., p. 8–9.

6 Ibid., p. 6.

7 Endang Supriadi / Ghufron Ajib / Sugiarso Sugiarso, Intoleransi Dan Radikalisme Agama: Konstruk LSM Tentang Program Deradikalisasi, in: JSW Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo 4/1 (2020), p. 53–72, here: 54.

8 Zuly Qodir, Kaum Muda, Intoleransi, dan Radikalisme Agama, in: Jurnal Studi Pemuda 5/1 (2016) https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jurnalpemuda/article/view/37127, p. 432 [Accessed: February 10, 2021].

gious conflict in Poso in 1992, the Sunni-Shia conflicts in East Java that emerged around 2006, the religious conflicts in Bogor, West Java, related to developments of the GKI Yasmin Church, which reached a climax in 2008[9], the suicide bombing at the Solo police headquarters on 5th July 2016, which occurred just before Ramadan; a bomb explosion in Kampung Melayu on 23rd May 2017; a further bomb explosion at the Surabaya church on 13th May 2018, another the following day at the police headquarters in Surabaya; a terrorist attack two days later at the police headquarters in Riau; and a bomb attack at the Kartasura Police Post, Central Java on 3rd June 2019.[10] After the DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election in 2017 and the 2019 Presidential Election, groups continuously mingled religious and political issues, almost dragging Indonesians into religious conflicts. Previously, according to a survey released by the Indonesian Survey Institute in 2010, cases of intolerance in Indonesia were on the decline, but increased again after 2017, especially with regard to building houses of worship.[11] A survey by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies of the UIN Jakarta published in the journal 'Intolerance and Religious Radicalism' in 2017 found that 34.3% of respondents consisting of young people agreed that jihad was a movement against non-Muslims. A survey from the Wahid Institute (2020) illustrates that intolerant attitudes in Indonesia are increasing, from 46% to 54%.[12] It concluded that several areas exhibit low tolerance levels, including:[13]

Rating	City	Score
85	Sedang	3.757
86	Medan	3.710
87	Makasar	3.637
88	Bogor	3.533
89	Depok	3.490
90	Padang	3.450

9 Ricky Santoso Muharam, Membangun Toleransi Umat Beragama Di Indonesia Berdasarkan Konsep Deklarasi Kairo (Creating Religion Tolerance in Indonesia Based on the Declaration of Cairo Concept), in: Journal HAM 11/2 (2020), http://dx.doi.org/10.30641/ham.2020.11.269-283, p. 270 [Accessed: February 2, 2021].

10 Supriadi / Ajib / Sugiarso, Intoleransi, p. 54.

11 CNN Indonesia, LSI: Intoleransi Di Era Jokowi Masih Tinggi (2019), https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/201911031 83341-32-445250/lsi-intoleransi-di-era-jokowimasih-tinggi [Accessed February 10, 2021].

12 Supriadi/Ajib/Sugiarso, Intoleransi, p. 54.

13 Muharam, Membangun Toleransi, p. 273.

91	Cilegon	3.420
92	Jakarta	2.880
93	Banda Aceh	2.830

The problems above are those exposed on social media, but there are many other problematic areas faced by minorities, both in the villages and cities that cannot be recorded. Intolerant attitudes that are the basis of radicalism must be minimised if chaos and even war are to be avoided. Therefore, in this paper I will explore the concept of mission in a world of intolerance.

2. The Church's mission to respond to intolerance

Mission

The word mission comes from the Latin 'mitto' (I send) and 'missio' (sending, mission)[14]. In English, German and French, it is referred to as 'mission'. Arie De Kuiper divides it into two major categories:

1. Mission (singular) referring to God's Mission, or the tasks given to us by God.
2. Mission (plural) referring to mission in the sense of the practical reality of implementing a task.[15]

Initially, the definition of mission was reached through countless long debates. According to David Bosch, it is a relatively new concept, since it was not carried out consciously in the early Church, but was based, instead, on the theologies of Matthew, Luke and Paul, which prove that their writings can be interpreted as continuous efforts to redefine what the Church should do in the world.[16]

The word mission was first used in 1544 by the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyala and Jacob Loyner, to describe the spread of the Christian faith. In 1588, Loyala wrote 'by mission, I mean journeys and undertakings carried on from town to town for the sake of the word of God.'[17] And, since the 19th century, efforts have made to define what mission is in a more conscious and clearer way.[18] Adequate definitions were created at the International Mission Council Conference in Jerusalem 1928 and in Whitby in 1974 using the terms kerygma/martyria and koinonia.

14 Craig Ott / Stephen J. Strauss / Timothy C. Tennent, Encountering Theology of Mission, United State: Baker Academic 2010, xiv.
15 Kuiper, Missiologia, p. 9–10.
16 David. J Bosch, Transforming of Mission, Maryknoll/New York: Orbits Books 2011, p. 785.
17 Ott/Strauss/Tennent, Encountering Theology, p. xiv.
18 Bosch, Transforming, p. 785.

In 1950, Hoekendijk added a third element, namely diaconia.[19] The above formulation, although recognised as still having limitations, is extremely useful in liberating the idea of mission from a narrow understanding.

On the basis of traditionally used theological synopses, David Bosch divides the basis of mission into four parts: (a) propagation of faith, (b) expansion of the reign of God, (c) conversion of the heathen, and (d) the founding of new churches.[20] However, according to Jerry Pillay, mission is not limited to 'saving souls' or 'planting churches'. Pillay tries to pick up on Hoekendijk's writings criticising the 'church-centred' view of mission, by pointing out that it does not completely agree with the biblical view. Such a view of mission, although still prevalent, has lost relevance in this century.[21]

Bosch, therefore, says that we must acknowledge, and be very satisfied with the missionary endeavours carried out for such a long time on a minimal basis. In this case, Bosch sets out Gustav Warneck's opinion, which distinguishes the basic mission between the 'supernatural' and the 'natural'. With regards to the former, he identified two elements: mission is based on Scripture (particularly the 'Great Commission' of Matthew 2:18–20) and on the monotheistic nature of the Christian faith. But the 'natural' grounds for mission are equally important : firstly, the absoluteness and superiority of the Christian religion when compared with others; secondly, the acceptability and adaptability of Christianity to all peoples and circumstances; thirdly, the superior achievements of the Christian mission on the 'mission fields'; and, fourthly, the fact that Christianity has, in the past and present, shown itself to be stronger than all other religions.[22] As outlined above, the understanding of mission experiences, in the end, a paradigm shift according to its needs.

Emilio Castro stated that God's mission and our mission is to bring the 'kingdom'; and the purpose of 'kingdom' is life in its fullness. The 'kingdom' is concerned with the welfare of the whole person, including the social, political and economic aspects. Because God is interested in human life as a whole.[23] The kingdom is the ultimate goal of Missio Dei. The classic doctrine of Missio Dei means that God the Father sent his Son, and God the Father and the Son sent the Spirit into the world, was expanded to include another movement; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sent the Church into the world.[24] This understanding

19 Ibid., p. 786.
20 Ibid., p. 1.
21 Jerry Pillay, Theological Foundation of Mission: An Asian Perspective, in: Claudia Währisch-Oblau / Fidon Mwombeki, Mission Continues Global Impulses for the 21st Century, United Kingdom: Regnum Edinburgh International 2010, p. 7–17, here p. 12.
22 Bosch, Transforming, p. 6–7.
23 Jerry Pillay, Mission, p. 13.
24 Bosch, Transforming, p. 96–601.

was first articulated by Karl Barth at a mission conference in Brandenburg in 1932. At the International Missionary Council (IMC) Conference in Willingen in 1952, the idea of Missio Dei emerged clearly. The primary references were to the purposes and actions of God in and for the entire universe.[25]

Missio Dei is always seen as a reference to God's government or kingdom. In 1 Cor. 15:24, Paul spoke of Jesus Christ 'giving up the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed all governments, authority and powers.' The kingdom in question is a life free from all the powers and forces that enslave human beings. The kingdom of God is the environment, in which the spirit of God reigns, where truth, peace and joy are experienced completely and permanently (Rom. 14:17). The kingdom of God is universally the source of all life, justice, love, wisdom and truth, the only redeemer, lord of history, a just and merciful judge. The understanding of the kingdom of God is a double liberation from slavery into the freedom and glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).[26] Therefore, responding to the Indonesian context, which is attended by intolerant people, the Church must be responsible for the realisation of God's mission in the midst of chaos by bringing solutions for the state to clean up intolerance.

Mission and the Church

The Church is part of God's plan for the universe.[27] The Church is God's instrument. But it is more than just a tool for evangelism or social change; the purpose of all the instruments of God, which includes the universe, is obedience to Christ. All of God's plans are accomplished through the Church.[28] The Church exists because of mission, not the other way around. Participating in mission means participating in the movement of God's love for humankind, because God is the source of love. This suggests that mission does not have a life of its own, and that only when it is in the hands of God, who sends mission, can it really be called mission, especially since the missionary initiative comes from God himself. Mission is, therefore, not merely an activity of the Church.[29] Mission exists to glorify God by continuing the work of God's kingdom in the world that Jesus began (Matthew 5:16).[30]

25 J. Andrew Kirk, Apa Itu Misi? Suatu Penelusuran Teologis, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 2018, p. 28.
26 Ibid., p. 34–35.
27 John Stott / Johannes Verkuyl, et al, Misi Menurut Perspektif Alkitab, Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih 2018, p. 152.
28 Ibid., p. 161.
29 Bosch, Transforming, p. 596–601.
30 Stott/Verkuyl, Misi Menurut, p. 163.

That is why Paul kept reminding the task of the Church of his apostles' calling in the New Testament. They were sent by God into the world to reach beyond their boundaries with the Gospel. Their task is to bring the nations into the kingdom of God, nations for which Christ died, but which had not recognised him as their king.[31] This requires the Church to carry out a wider ministry to preach the good news (Luke 4:18-19)[32] to all creatures without restriction. Just as Jesus, in the mission of the kingdom of God, does his work to have an impact on the life of the world, it is, therefore, fitting for the Church to act by directing all creation to the fullness of peace in God (Colossians 1:15). The fact that the Church exists only as a means intended by Jesus to help mankind live in God's kingdom, shows that the essence of the mission of the Church is to proclaim the kingdom of God in the world.[33]

The Church's mission to address intolerance

In the current Indonesian context, the Church needs to fully understand its mission to minimise intolerance. Mission, in the context of dealing with people, who are intolerant, is not easy because these people are so preoccupied with their dogmatism, fanaticism and extremism. And even politicians ride on the name of religion to implement their goals, which has the effect of making intolerant people stubborn; they try to impose their own dominance and this, in turn, can result in violence. In response to this problem, a reappraisal of mission is required; not only to understand it as aiming to bring souls into the Christian fold, but to show how God's love is manifested in their midst and has an impact on peace in the world. To achieve this goal, churches need to be inclusive; according to David Bosch inclusive mission is the nature of Jesus' mission. Its mission includes rich and poor, the oppressed and the oppressor, the sinful and the godly. Its mission is to eliminate alienation and destroy the walls of hatred, a mission that crosses all boundaries between individuals and groups.[34]

Growing intolerance has a very negative impact on adherents of other religions. That is why the Church needs to collaborate with other religions that feel uneasy about intolerance by voicing these concerns to the government, so that it, in turn, can deal immediately with these attitudes, Made Priana describes how important it is to deal with people, who are intolerant, and proposes a three-step plan. Firstly, provide assistance and education to liberate religious communities from dogmatism. Secondly, organise, promote and build religious

31 Ibid., p. 147.
32 Ibid., p. 163.
33 Edmund Woga CSsR, Dasa-Dasar Misiologi, Yogyakarta: Kanisius 2006, p. 189–192.
34 Bosch, Transforming, p. 41–42.

communities that are mutually open and willing to engage in dialogue. Thirdly, carry out interfaith co-operation that also has benefits for the wider community. The mentoring and education programme focuses on the liberation of religious communities from dogmatism, since religious dogma, itself, is not standardised, never mind something that has a divine nature. Priana follows Raymondo Panikkar's understanding of religious dogma as an instrument used to explain what we believe. We are, therefore, not wrong if we are continuously reforming it with the purposes of achieving social transformation that glorifies humanity.[35]

An inclusive understanding of mission, also based on the uniqueness of the Gospel itself, refers to the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:13-19, in which the Gospel is referred to as the good news that unites all people as the family of God. This text is used to view other religions as neighbours, not as enemies.[36] Alongside this, it may be necessary to learn from the mission of the Franciscan Order, which was pioneered by Francis from Assisi. Francis began his ministry as a result of the message he received from the crucifix in response to his prayer in the church of San Damiano Francis. The message, containing the words, 'Francis, go and repair my church!', was interpreted literally to repair the churches around Assisi but, three years later, Francis decided to live in poverty by imitating Christ, taking his inspiration from Matthew 10:5–16.[37] The Franciscans are considered to be the first founders of a religious order that consciously incorporated mission to non-Christians (Muslims). The Franciscan approach to Islam offers a peaceful alternative, not wanting to become embroiled in the crusades that were taking place at that time, since Francis identified that the peacemakers on earth are the blessed children of God.[38]

The mission to Muslims began when Francis sent some of his followers to Tunisia and Morocco, while he, himself, went to Egypt with some of his colleagues. In a situation marked by great conflicts at the time between Christians and Muslims, Francis was welcomed in Egypt by the sultan, Al-Malik al-Kamil, since he was coming to the country as a religious person and not as a warrior of Christian-

35 Made Priana, Rekonstruksi Misi Gereja Di Indonesia Dari Perspektif Pancasila Sebagai Religiositas Sipil Indonesia (2016), vol. 3/1, p. 118, https://ejournal.uksw.edu/waskita/article/view/1307 [Accessed February 14, 2021].

36 Ebenhaizer I Nuban Timo, Gereja Lintas Agama: Pemikiran-Pemikiran bagi Pembaharuan Kekristenan di Asia, Yogyakarta: Satya Wacana University Press 2013, p. 52–54.

37 John Coakley, Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans, in: Church History 60/4 (1991), p 445–460.

38 Albrecht Classen, Elusive Peace? A Glimmer Of Hope from a Medieval Perspective with an Emphasis on Saint Francis Of Assisi and Christine de Pizan (2017), http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=0e7619a4-f7b5-4f19-a35b-db1f08c4fa68%40sessionmgr4007, p. 16 [Accessed August 16, 2018].

ity. The meeting of the two hostile blocks established friendship instead. This is considered important for the history of mission. Francis' experience is an example and a guide for missionaries in his community: those going to the Saracens and other 'unbelievers' must demonstrate 'living spiritually' through [39] 'the Christian presence and witness, which does not begin with' quarrels or strife 'but is based on' submitting to every creature for the sake of God (1 Petr 2:13). In the reality of multiculturalism, hostility must be abandoned and hospitality created. The attitude of Sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil is an example of hospitality that all religions should practise when dealing with all other religions. In the context of Indonesia, a hospitality-based approach is one way to create tolerance that is based on local wisdom as the foundation of the nation. Mission and evangelism must, therefore, be based on a theological approach of hospitality or, in other words, the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) must be inspired by the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40) which respects and loves adherents of other religions.

3. Theological reflection

Peace in plurality cannot be achieved, if each religion seeks to emphasise and impose its own self-interest. Peace can only be achieved in conditions of harmony. Religious communities may have differences, have little in common, but when they are open-minded and mutually tolerant, such religious groups are able to live alongside one another, without reducing their respective basic rights to carry out their religious obligations.

With regard to the intolerance occurring in Indonesia, taking Jesus as our example really helps reduce conflicts caused by radical groups. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman delivered a message and demonstrated that no ethnicity, race, group or religion was inferior to any other. Jesus accepted the existence of other nations and wanted to associate with them. And that is not all. Jesus did not hesitate to learn and adopt good examples from foreign nations for his moral-ethical teachings. The views and attitudes of Jesus towards other nations, religions, and tribes in the story of conversations with Samaritan women show Jesus' recognition and acceptance of their existence, that they are a nation that needs to be treated well, namely by paying attention to, and uplifting, the dignity of their lives.[40]

39 Stephen B Bevans / Roger P Schroeder, Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today, Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian 2004, p. 143.

40 Rikardo Dayanto Butar-Buta et al., Pengajaran Tuhan Yesus Mengenai Toleransi Dan Implementasinya Ditengah Masyarakat Majemuk, vol. Vol 4, No 1 Maret 2019; (Real Didache, 2021), 95.

Paying particular attention to intolerance is one way of educating and can act as a solid foundation to convey the good news, the Gospel or the news of salvation to others, so that they may be saved; or freed from the bondage of ignorance, poverty, pain and suffering, and can live in peace. From the teachings of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, it is clear that difference or diversity are not to be contradicted or stand in the way of love for others. Difference is a gift from Allah, which gives beautiful colours to life. This means that the narrow exclusive attitude and view must be overthrown, because it becomes an obstacle to fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ, to become his witness. Living one's life while simultaneously dealing with diversity in society must reflect the face of Christ, which accommodates all people, all religions and beliefs, and are identities that must be embedded in every believer. Jesus Christ teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and that this should be the basis for the thinking and behaviour of all believers, since this teaching is already evident in the practice of Christ's ministry.[41]

With regard to the situation in Indonesia, intolerance exhibited by adherents of radical religions is caused by:

- the existence of belief in holy texts that teach about terrorism based on the word jihad;
- radicalism associated with a perception of political, economic and legal injustice operating in a country;
- radicalism associated with a perception that law enforcement is unfair;
- education that puts more emphasis on aspects of indoctrination and teaching that justify violence.

It is, therefore, necessary to change mission in accordance with the context, in which the particular church is located. The mission of the Church must, firstly, be inclusive and, secondly, the Church must approach it with an attitude of hospitality. The goal is to create peace between religions. Christianity must not remain silent in responding to the increasingly widespread development of intolerance, but must participate by becoming pioneers in stopping the intolerance of the followers of radical religions.

Optional measures:

1. Co-operation with and between all religions that are experiencing unrest brought about by intolerance, because it has damaged the ideology of the country.

41 Ibid.

2. Co-operation with the government to provide education to intolerant actors so that they can change their attitudes and behaviour.

But this will be difficult: winning votes to achieve success is not easy, since many politicians use religious issues as a means to achieve their political goals. But if the people are united, then the goals can be achieved.

4. Recommendations

For the HKBP

The HKBP is a large church in Indonesia, which should play a major role in creating peace in the Indonesian context. Up to now, however, the HKBP movement has not acted quickly enough to eradicate intolerance. The HKBP churches, in particular, experienced many problems at the hands of radical groups, for example, in relation to the ban on building houses of worship in several areas, in not being able to worship freely as the majority religion with a strong voice, etc. In response to these problems, the HKBP should work together with all churches within the Indonesian Church Union to convey its concern to the state, so that the state can discuss this issue as soon as possible. Because, if only one church speaks up, this will get less attention.

For the UEM fellowship

The UEM is a large organisation with considerable impact on the churches within its communion. It does not only send missionaries to mission fields, but also participates in the efforts to resolve the suffering experienced by its member churches. When responding to the problems confronting it, the UEM must also emphasise to the churches in its communion to act quickly to deal with the current problems of radicalism. The UEM, as a large organisation, must be able to empower these churches to deal with intolerant attitudes, provide new insights into missions that are relevant to the particular context, open dialogue that unites diversity, and have a positive impact on the country.

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"HOW'S YOUR NEIGHBOUR?"

A Critical Evaluation of how Indonesia is Tackling Intolerance and what Contribution Can be Made by the Church

Mikhael Sihotang

1. Introduction

From 2014 to 2019, Indonesia's identity as a pluralistic nation began to be threatened by increasingly widespread acts of violence in the name of religion. For example, in 2016, Indonesia was shocked by a terror act committed by a man in Medan, North Sumatra. The man tried to blow himself up in the Catholic Church of Saint Joseph, in which, at the time, mass was being held. He, himself, did not belong to the parish. Luckily, the bomb exploded before he found the priest, who was going to preach, and the blast was not as destructive as it could have been. This act succeeded in disturbing the religious community in Indonesia. If it had been better prepared, many more innocent people would undoubtedly have been killed. Further investigations resulted in several unique findings. One of them was the discovery of the ISIS extremist group logo along with the man's identity card. On the basis of this finding and other supportive evidence, the police concluded that the young man was a supporter of ISIS in Indonesia, although not officially affiliated with any Indonesian terrorist group.

This incident revived a problem that has been virulent but largely ignored in Indonesia: discrimination towards minority groups that is sometimes reflected in local laws. For example, in Aceh, where Islam, as the predominant religion, is implemented in formal-regional law: six Sharia laws have been adopted into formal law. Each of these regional laws is accompanied by further explanation regarding its technical implementation. In themselves, these Sharia-based regulations would not meet such opposition if they applied only to Muslim citizens in the area concerned. However, these regional laws do, in fact, apply to all believers, including non-Muslims. Yet, it is also a fact that Indonesia, of which Aceh is a part, is not a religion-based country. Thus, all formal law in Indonesia should not be based on one particular religion alone.

To help us gain a clearer picture of what is really happening in Indonesia, research from *The Wahid Institute* (hereafter: TWI) will be used. The TWI has

been working on this issue for several years, publishing an annual report, *Freedom of Religion and Belief* (hereafter: FRB), in Indonesia. This work is done to commemorate the fourth president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, widely respected as a progressive and inclusive figure in the country.

2. Description of challenge and findings

The Wahid Institute published its first annual report in 2008 and presented its most recent FRB report in 2017. In this paper, the annual reports I will use are those from 2015 to 2017. It is worth noting that, in 2014 (recorded in the 2015 report), one major event affected relations between religious people in Indonesia, and continues to have an impact today. This was the 2014 Presidential election. This event succeeded in placing politics and religion in the same arena, not to battle one another, but so that both could be used to gain people's votes. This often succeeded in putting people into several boxes. The event also continued to cause some turbulence in society for the subsequent two years.

The Wahid Institute collects and compiles data in a number of steps. Firstly, the TWI monitors national and local news media in Indonesia. Secondly, the TWI collects data and information from institutions or individuals, who work together with them and have the same attention as the TWI. Thirdly, the TWI collects data through SMS-based community complaint channels created by the TWI, called Mobile Monitor KBB. The data collected is then analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods. For example, by comparing the equivalent data from the previous year or by focusing attention on cases that stand out and are the subject of discussion in the year of the report.[1]

From the report presented by the TWI, it is known that, in 2015, there were 190 events with 249 actions. This showed an increase of 20 per cent from 2014, which recorded 158 events and 187 actions.[2] In 2016, 204 events and 315 actions were recorded, an increase of 7 per cent from the previous year. In 2017, 213 events and 265 actions were reported. On closer inspection, the number of events in 2017 had increased from the previous year, whereas the number of actions had decreased.[3]

Please note that all annual reports were based on findings from nearly all Indonesia provinces. For example, in 2015, observations were made in 25 provinces, in 2016 in 30 provinces and in 2017 in 27 provinces. Indonesia has 34

1 Institute, Yearly Report of Wahid Institute 2015, p. 2.
2 Institute, Yearly Report of Wahid Institute 2015, p. 32.
3 Institute, Yearly Report of Wahid Institute 2017, p. 15.

provinces. This is why the TWI annual report could be used as a reference to observe the condition of Indonesia as a whole. It is, thus, no exaggeration to say that Indonesia is currently not in a good shape, since violations of religion and religious belief occur in almost all Indonesian regions. The latest case, on 28th November 2020, was an attack in Lembatongoa village in the Sigi Regency in Central Sulawesi, killing four residents. The attack was carried out by the East Indonesia Mujahiddin (MIT) terrorist group.

One other key factor that enables us to say that Indonesia is in a somewhat chaotic state is that most perpetrators of violations are elements of government. The FRB reports revealed a key finding that between 2015 and 2017, the police were found to be more responsible than any other group for violations against the freedom of religion and religious beliefs in Indonesia. The very body that is given the responsibility to uphold the law and provide security for all people in Indonesia is actually one of the main perpetrators of violations against these safeguards.

Apart from intolerance, it is most encouraging to see that women's issues are being more commonly discussed in public in Indonesia and that women's opinions are more likely to be heard. That is why more women are now appearing in public. According to *Kompas,* the daily newspaper, from 11th November 2019, the number of women sitting in the House of Representatives is continuing to increase by 30 per cent, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution. *Kompas* adds that this number continues to grow at each general election. In more detailed terms, the number of women elected in 2014 was 131 and, in 2019, there was an increase of 20.9 per cent in the House of Representatives and 36 per cent in the Regional Representative Council. A total of 162 women were elected to the House of Representative.[4] Although the total has not reached the minimum percentage set out in the 1945 Constitution, we could claim that women now occupy strategic positions in decision-making processes. The best development, so far, was the 2019 general election, when the first woman in Indonesian history became parliamentary speaker. The statistics show that society is starting to trust women more to be involved in solving common problems such as intolerance. Intolerance must be regarded as a common problem because of its potential to cause national, or even, international upheaval.

Indonesia is widely known as a religious country. This does not necessarily mean that it is a religion-based country, but that religion is truly embedded in every aspect of Indonesian life. Thus, the use of religion, in general, or the narrative of defining women within religion, specifically, would be a practical move to solving intolerance, since it touches on two important matters that have been known

4 Saputra, Partisipasi Politik Perempuan Naik.

and highlighted in Indonesia: religion and feminism. Such a move is even more important, since for many years women have taken on important roles in several religions, even though their presence has often been ignored. One other aspect of this is the lack of women in the accounts of our sacred books. This is a contradiction of what we actually find on a day-to-day basis, where Indonesians, in general, are prepared to devote so much time and praise to their mothers. So, today is the right time to involve women in solving intolerance. However, some people might think that intolerance in Indonesia has not yet reached a critical condition or believe that an immediate response is not required. But for the same reason, we must see it from a different angle. Finding a solution to intolerance is important, because, even if it is still at a very early stage, we need to anticipate its potential catastrophic effect, instead of waiting until it has become too big and too complex.

3. Analysis and theological reflection

One divine female figure will be discussed in this paper to help us settle on some recommendations – if not *the* solution – to combat intolerance in Indonesia. This divine figure is Mary, Mother of Jesus. This section will show how Mary has been venerated in several countries and has successfully brought peaceful conditions to the countries concerned.

The first country is Costa Rica. In 1824, *La Negrita*, literally translated as *Little Nan Black* [or The Black Madonna], was declared protector of Costa Rica. Her image is often considered motherly, carrying the baby Jesus in her left arm. This image was engraved on a rock and first appeared to a woman named Juana Pereira. The small statue was then taken home, but it continued to appear in the same place where it was originally found. This is how it all started. Eventually, the lady and several priests decided to build a church on that very spot to honour the figure. This incident itself occurred on 2nd August 1635 and, to this day, this date is still dedicated to *La Negrita*. Every year on 2nd August, thousands of pilgrims from all regions of Costa Rica gather in Cartago. Pilgrims take different routes and use various means to reach the meeting point. Many walk, some of them taking several days. According to a report in the local media in 2007, more than two million people participated in *Romeria*, as the pilgrimage is known in Spanish.

One of Costa Rica's national myths is that it is 'whiter' and more egalitarian than its neighbours. This is why Costa Ricans of African descent – mostly living on the Caribbean coast – and natives still suffer racism and marginalisation on account of their skin colour. For those who are marginalised, the egalitarian image of Costa Rica is nothing more than a nationalist myth created by the ruling

elite to form a unified nation, which, has had a negative impact. The cult of *La Negrita* has elements similar to that of other Marian personifications in Latin America, such as the *Virgin of Guadalupe*, but has a specific local meaning. Like *La Negrita* and the *Virgin of Guadalupe*, in Latin America, Maria often appears as a representation of lower class, racially marginalised people, such as Indians and slaves, in times of chaos. The Marian apparition has been described both as a motivation to evangelise and control indigenous and black peoples, and as a story of their empowerment and greater social and racial cohesion – in the case of the *Virgin of Guadalupe*, even as the core of Mexico's mestizo identity [people of a combine European and Indigenous American ancestry].

La Negrita is often seen as a strong subject, made of rock and, thereby, not exactly the same as most other apparitions of the Mother of God in Europe or elsewhere. In the basilica dedicated to *La Negrita*, itself, the statue is surrounded with the many nationalist symbols of the state of Costa Rica. Like the flag, which reflects its contemporary meaning primarily as a 'creation' symbol of the Costa Rican identity, and has been redefined over the centuries as a local symbol of the marginalised, alienated cult of black people. Racially-based oppression included slavery and the prohibition of black people travelling from the 'African' Caribbean coast to the 'Hispanic' central valley of Costa Rica until the 1930s. Unfortunately, the meaning of this version is no longer remembered or told in the interpretation given by the current, official version of the legend. In contrast, the nationalist myth of a 'whiter' Costa Rica upholding racial and ethnic equality, which is theoretically contradictory, has instead taken its place in the official interpretations issued by the government and widely used today.

The lower level of the *La Negrita* basilica is where the more popular expressions of devotion are expressed, especially in the form of small ex-votos [votive offerings to a saint or divinity], devotional objects, locally called *Milagros* or *Promesas*. These were small metal engraving given as tokens of gratitude or request to the Virgin. For many in Costa Rica, *La Negrita* is clearly not the only personification of the Virgin Mary in Costa Rica. Most people see the meaning of this phenomenon more broadly, since this passage is not specifically about *La Negrita* but the meaning of the Virgin Mary, in general. But many will agree that this *La Negrita* figure is so miraculous, since she is believed to protect marginalised groups in society.[5]

As I mentioned above, belief in her miraculousness is an important aspect of *La Negrita*. To prove this vital aspect, we only have to look at the shops around the basilica, selling bottles in the shape of *La Negrita* for people to fill at the

5 Vuola, Elina: The Virgin Mary Across Cultures: Devotion Among Costa Rican Catholic and Finnish Orthodox Women, New York, NY: Routledge 2019, p. 81–88.

fountain. And further observation would reveal that, in general, people turn to *La Negrita* to participate in the shared national fervour on specific national holidays or at times of great anxiety as well as the special need for miracles. The *Promesas* are brought to *La Negrita*, either to ask her a favour or thank her for a miracle, sometimes both. They are all gender-related but, in order to fully understand the *La Negrita* cult, it is also necessary to take account of class, ethnicity, and economics.[6]

The second country I want to look at is Finland. In Finland, as in most other countries of the world, Mary is often associated with motherhood, because of the many occasions, in which Mary has been described as a great, resilient mother because she succeeded in accompanying Jesus when carrying out his mission in the world, even though she had to face much opposition from the society, in which they lived. The figure of Maria becomes very personal for most Orthodox women in Finland and becomes more understandable when a Finnish woman holds the status of a mother in a family. Even though Mary seems to be only close to women with the status of a mother, for Finnish women in general, who have not become mothers, or even could not become mothers for some reasons, they still have a strong affinity to the figure of Mary. The affinity of Finnish orthodox women to this figure is demonstrated by their devotions. Because they feel so close to Maria, many Finnish women knowingly confess many things when praying to God, through Mary. Especially when what they are specifically praying for is closely associated with motherhood or the responsibility of women as mothers, the language and words used in their prayers also sound more personal. The affinity of women to this figure of Mary is also evident in the devotions of Catholic women.

Apart from prayer and devotions, the figure of Maria also teaches Finnish women how to regard their own bodies. Finnish women often discuss the issue of chastity in the Church and its relation to the virginity of Mary, and its meaning. After examining its theological and practical meanings, Finnish women will then relate it to their experiences as sexual beings. This is what often incites sharp criticism of church policies and how they are enforced. As we all know, in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, women are prohibited from attending church services when they have just given birth or during their menstrual period. It was this policy that the Finnish Orthodox women sought to criticise.

Despite having adequate female resources within the Orthodox Church, no tradition has been formally reconstructed using a feminist theological perspective. However, many feel that the liturgy and spirituality that accommodate Mary and her motherhood in the Orthodox Church are actually sufficient for

6 Vuola, The Virgin Mary, p. 92.

now, although many other aspects remain that ought to be addressed to make it more accommodating for women in the future. To be sure, we need to see how important the figure of Mary is for the functioning of the Orthodox Church as evidenced by the liturgy and spiritual style adopted. This proves that the figure of Mary is not only important for women, but also for men, who are often the decision-makers in the Orthodox Church.[7]

Although Costa Rica and Finland are culturally different, there is one thing that Indonesia could learn from Maria's role in these countries: unity. Maria's success in uniting Costa Rican people to fight for their political rights proves that when Mary is interpreted in such a manner, the result is unity in society. Similarly, when Mary is considered special to the Orthodox Church, in general, and by women in Finland, in particular, what happens is the unity of the voices of Finnish women on the importance of mutual strengthening among women and the agreement within the Orthodox Church about the greatness of Mary, which is evident in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. In short, embodying the values taught by Mary through her life and story could help certain groups, in this case an entire country, create a peaceful, undivided social condition. Thus, Indonesia should do the same and embody the values taught by Mary.

4. Recommendation

In order to embody the values taught by Mary, I have divided my recommendations to my church, the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP or Batak Christian Protestant Church), and to the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) into two schemes, short-term and long-term. For the short-term, I would like to encourage the HKBP to initiate a women's month each year, in which divine females figures can be venerated throughout all HKBP parishes. During this month, each local parish would be encouraged to celebrate, in its own way, divine female figures from the bible. This month of celebrations could be implemented in the form of a festival, a competition (choir, church decoration, jingle of the month) or other possibilities. During the whole process (from preparation to evaluation), young people from the congregation concerned would be explicitly invited to actively participate. The UEM could help the HKBP execute this idea, since it has already been actively working on this specific issue. In addition, the UEM could provide exposure to promulgate the purpose of this event and raise people's awareness of the point of the celebrations held during this month. The biggest obstacle facing this suggestion, is that the values being shared may not

7 Vuola, The Virgin Mary, p. 112–139.

be fully understood by the people. That is why it is so important for the churches to ensure that their members do not just enjoy the hype but are prepared to become agents of change. Secondly, the HKBP, as the third largest religious community in Indonesia, could make more frequent public appearances to articulate its stand on intolerance or any other issue that matters for so many people. This, too, would spread the spirit of the inclusiveness of the HKBP to others.

With regard to long-term plans, since we want to produce inclusive generations, we should then try to accomplish this through education. I would, therefore, like to suggest that the HKBP and the UEM should collaborate to create a school curriculum, which would subsequently be implemented in schools owned by the HKBP. This could provide momentum to the HKBP to rebrand its schools, which have not been looked after properly for many years. The HKBP could invite its members, who are eligible, to collaborate in creating this curriculum. Young people would prefer a curriculum that is more up-to-date. Later, the curriculum could transmit and instil such values as inclusiveness, honesty, fighting for justice, empowering the marginalised and solidarity. The curriculum could also be implemented in Sunday school, to broaden the impact. For this suggestion, there could be more obstacles than we would expect. Such as, finding the eligible parties and the process, itself, which could be too time-consuming. But this long-term suggestion is worth fighting for, for the benefit of future generations.

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BUILDING HOSPITABLE COMMUNITIES

Interreligious Hospitality Based on the Philosophy of *orang basudara* in Maluku

Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu

1. Introduction: Maluku post conflict and the need for inter-religious dialogue

Communal conflicts that occurred in Maluku between 1999 and 2004 have ravaged society. The disputes have also harmed relationships among religious people in Maluku and filled them with unforgettable, bitter memories. The issues of social segregation, loss of mutual trust and the stigmatisation of Muslims as 'terrorists' and Christians as 'RMS (Republik Maluku Selatan, Southern Maluku Republic) separatists' have been deeply constructed. Therefore, in the spirit of striving for peace, the dialogue between the two religious groups is a necessary and considerable undertaking in the effort to overcome stigmas and stereotypes and, thus, to restore mutual trust.

Suspicion, mistrust and terror also appear in such expressions as '*do not believe in Christians*' or '*do not believe in Muslims*' that reflect, more or less, the following two points: firstly, it is still difficult to forget the desolating conflict and tragedy, which made it difficult to forgive each other; and secondly, the level of mistrust between Christians and Muslims is high. Thus, the effort to build a space for dialogue between the two *salam-sarane* (traditional terms for Islam and Christianity) communities becomes imperative to break through the doors and move beyond post-conflict boundaries.

The need for space and time to sit together and talk, heart to heart, and engage in dialogue *as* fellow brothers and sisters, or *orang basudara*, becomes an urgent matter on the agenda, something being continuously attempted. It is undeniable that the collective, force-fed narratives of resentment, terror and mistrust are part of the lives of the religious people in Maluku. They put up high walls and make no conducive space in their mind for others, who are different from them. These walls distance the religious people from each other, even when they are physically close.

Creating space for dialogue can lead to the genuine building of trust between the two religious groups. The breaking down of these walls of mistrust will encourage openness and facilitate encounters between both groups. The people will no longer have to meet each other as if they were on the battlefield as enemies, ready to kill and destroy each other. How should the encounter between fellow brothers of *the salam-sarane* manifest itself? Is it not that the encounter should occur as a life-giving encounter as fellow brothers or *orang basudara*?

2. Two ways of building inter-religious dialogue: Amos Yong

Amos Yong is a distinguished Pentecostal theologian of the *Assemblies of God* in Malaysia and North California. Yong was born in Malaysia, yet he settled in the United States when he was still young. Yong undertook his doctoral study at Boston University, USA, and gave birth to a work later published within his book *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*.[1] Amos Yong was also one of the lecturers at Bethel University.[2] For Yong, the theology of religions should become part of the effort in response to the phenomena of human diversity within the complexity of their relation to God.[3] Yong proposed two approaches to studying religions and building relationships among religious groups, namely the *Theological Way* and the *Praxis Way***.** He propounded the praxis of 'hospitality' as the key to constitute relations and interrelation among religions.[4]

Yong based his praxis approach on hospitality as the means of building relations among religions and building interreligious dialogue. Yong understood hospitality as a part of Christian living praxis. He concluded that, within the hospitality system, the guests could hold their host as a hostage in that the latter is obliged to try everything to make his guests feel at home. Yong pointed out how Jesus, having no permanent home and always travelling from one place to another, was hosted by kind-hearted guests. In the visiting process, Jesus became the host while the visited hosts became the guests within their own households.[5]

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1 Amos Yong, Discerning the spirit(s): A Pentecosatal-Charismatic Contributin to Chistian Theology of Religions, Sheffield: Academic Press 2000.

2 Amos Yong, Hospitality and The Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor, Maryknoll: Orbis Books 2008, p. 1.

3 Amos Yong, Beyond the impasse: Toward a pneumatological theology of religions, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2003, p. 17.

4 Amos Yong, The Spirit of Hospitality: Pentacostal Perspective toword a Performative Theology of Interreligious Encounter, in: Missiology 35/1 (2007), p. 58, 62.

5 Kees De Jong, Teologi (misi) Interkultural, in: Kees De Jong / Yusak Tridarmanto (eds.), Teologi dalam Silang Budaya: Menguak Makna Teologi Interkultural serta Peranannya bagi

3. Interreligious dialogue in Ambon

There have been many approaches to building interreligious dialogue in Ambon following the communal conflicts that were quite complex and multi-dimensional. The conflicts were not only related to religious identity but also to regional, ethnic, racial and political identity and, similarly, to the status of existence, land and land boundaries. All of the above are important considerations to take before making decisions on further analysis and approaches. Dealing with such complex and multi-dimensional conflicts requires a variety of methods.[6]

Lailatul Firtiyah[7] mentions at least two main patterns in interreligious dialogue in Ambon. The first is the dynamic of interreligious dialogues that took place at the public level. Priests, clerics, pastors and Kiai (experts in Islam) generally act on the dialogue spaces at this level, act as bridges in the communication among religions and reflect the effort to foster dialogue in the life of religious people within society. Local communities converge in the public spaces, such as markets, and initiate dialogues, thereby restoring amity and re-bonding as fellow brothers. The second pattern is the dialogue among religious people at the level of the elite group. Both individuals and groups affiliated with educational institutions, academics, political-governmental institutions, state officials, journalists and interest-based youth groups dominate interreligious dialogue at this level.

The riveting characteristic of interreligious dialogue on both levels is the different patterns of openness and response towards the reality of religious plurality. The public portrays such discourses among religions as a part of their day-to-day lives. As an informal pattern, interreligious dialogues on the public level are more flexible and flowing, not influenced by pressure and limit of time. On the other hand, the interreligious discussions among elite groups tend to be formal and conducted with direction towards existing targets or goals.

There is a cultural tradition of *pela-gandong* (the values that encourage the attainment of a harmonious life together). These values are communion and

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Upaya Berolah Teologi di tengah-tengah Pluralisme Masyarakat Indonesia, Yogyakarta: TPK dan Fakultas Teologi UKDW 2015, p. 36.

6 Sumanto Al Qurtuby, Islam, Kristen dan Dunia lain di Maluku, in: Elizabeth Marantika et al. (eds.), Menanam, Menyiram Bertumbuh dan Berbuah: Teologi GPM dalam Praksis Berbangsa dan Bernegara, Salatiga: Satya Wacana University Press dan Sinode GPM 2015, p. 332–333.

7 Lailatul Fitriyah, Damai di Negeri Salam-Sarane: Perspektif Seorang Anak Piara Muslim, in: Elizabeth Marantika et al. (eds.), Delapan Dekade GPM Menanam, Menyiram Bertumbuh dan Berbuah: Teologi GPM dalam Praksis Berbangsa dan Bernegara, Satya Wacana University Press dan Sinode GPM, Salatiga 2015, p. 344–346.

family life, the life of equality and peace with each other.[8] Alongside the cultural reality of *pela*, there is also the concept of *salam-sarane*.[9] *Salam-sarane* is the local genius of the Moluccans, enriched with live values. Moluccans understand themseves as *orang basudara* (fellow brothers and sisters), represented by the origin of the term *salam-sarane*. *Salam-sarane* is *not a dichotomic* reality but a *dialectical* one. The dialectics of *salam-sarane* becomes the foundational element in building a more harmonious life of the Moluccans. The richness of fraternal values, openness and equality are the power to pave the way for the relationship among religious people in Maluku.

4. Hospitality as 'the way' to build dialogue

Hospitality as the practical path towards post-conflict, interreligious dialogue in Maluku has a high likelihood of being an alternative solution. It answers the need for discussions rooted in openness that dismiss deep, mutual suspicion, fear and hatred. Hospitality makes it possible to encounter each other, both as *hosts* and *guests*. The instruments of culture and local wisdom in Maluku legitimate these possibilities, in that they richly contain the values of fraternity, kinship, openness and equality.

Additionally, hospitality is also a very significant situation required for interreligious dialogue to take place. Moreover, Catherine Cornille mentions five conditions required to build interreligious dialogue: humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy and hospitality. For Cornille, hospitality also encompasses the other conditions required for interreligious dialogues to take place. In other words, hospitality becomes the consequential requirement to build interreligious dialogue.[10]

The conditions mentioned above must be a mutual concern in building interreligious dialogue. Efforts to construct such discussions focus too much on trying out all means, approaches or models. They tend to neglect or disregard hospitality or assume it is a self-presented condition, whereas it is the ideal condition that supports the establishment of cultivated dialogue among religions.

8 Josef Hehanussa, Pela dan Gandong: Sebuah Model untuk Kehidupan Bersama dalam Konteks Pluralisme Agama di Maluku, in: Gema Teologi 33/1 (2009), p. 120–123.

9 Salam is a local term used by the people to refer to their Moslem brothers. Meanwhile, sarane is their name for their Christian brothers. Salam-sarane is not understood from a religious point of view. It also refers to the totality of self as Moluccans.

10 Catherine Cornille, Conditions for Interreligious Dialogue, in: Catherine Cornille (ed.), The Willey Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue, UK: John Wiley & Son Ltd 2013, p. 20–31.

5. The philosophy of *hidup orang basudara:* The foundation of hospitality

The philosophy of *hidup orang basudara* (life of the brothers and sisters) frames and lays the foundation for hospitality to take place as a practical way of building dialogue among religious people in Maluku. Hospitality goes beyond the principle and attitude of friendship, enabling the encounter, service and co-operation among people with a diverse religious background. Derrida, Levinas and Yong argued that the posture of friendliness is necessary to implement the idea of hospitality. Such an attitude can overcome negative stigma and all the apriori assumptions among religions. Although the proposed argument can be a good starting point, it should not merely end on the attitude of friendship. We must think beyond and even depart from the narrower meaning of friendship towards building a bond as fellow brothers. In an interreligious relationship, we are not all just friends, but brothers. Using the terminology and philosophy of Maluku, we are all *orang basudara* – born from the same womb. In the religious context, the view that we are all are brothers born from the Divine womb, despite our diverse religions, can be a great starting point to build interreligious dialogues.

The philosophy of *hidup orang basudara* is a habitat and the authentic character of the people of Maluku. It manifests itself in the life values of accepting, acknowledging and respecting each other. It also embraces the virtues of openness to one another and collaboration for the mutual improvement of life. *Hidup orang basudara* is the strength and driving force to establish interreligious dialogue within the reality of plurality in Maluku. The philosophy empowers the values of true harmony portrayed in social life, cultural customs, sacred religions and sustainable life.[11] For the people of Maluku, *orang basudara* is a communal, specific picture of self. It is not an empty idea within an intellectual agenda. It is a hope that gives strength to the life, mind and physical existences of the people within a totality of feeling that is almost limitless. The philosophy of *orang basudara* combines two types of dialectical reasoning in itself: rational and social reasoning. Both types of reasoning are the sources of mutual wisdom, guiding both linear, intelligent reasoning and mental, spiritual reasoning. The philosophy of *orang basudara* also becomes the self-reflection and character of living.[12]

11 Aholiab Watloly, Cerminan Eksistensi Masyarakat Kepulauan dalam Pembangunan Bangsa: Perspektif Indegenious Orang Maluku, Jakarta: Intimedia CiptaNusantara 2013, p. 420–423.

12 Aholiab Watloly, Bacarita Sejuta Rasa, Epilog in: Jacky Manuputty et al. (eds.), Carita Orang Basudara, Jakarta 2014, p. 366–367.

6. Conclusion

This shows the vital importance of using the model of hospitality as a practical means or an alternative method of building inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia. In line with its implementation within the post-conflict context of religious people in Maluku, it is necessary to adopt the hospitality model as an alternative solution. The concept of hospitality contains foundational tones that are similar to many kinds of local wisdom in Indonesia. The similarities are evident in the living praxis enriched by the act of hospitality. The values of local wisdom are also apparent in the many practices of eating together, such as *kenduri, megibung, bancakan, Makan basamo* and *Makan patita.* They are practiced at a personal level, among brothers and neighbours and at a communal level among villages.

As an alternative solution, hospitality revitalises and actualises the values of local wisdom in interreligious dialogue. It does not only imply that one religious group must be welcoming hosts for others from diverse religious backgrounds and to treat them well as good hosts. Hospitality invites the hosts to be courageous and visit the *home* of other religions. Hospitality does not end with the act of being good hosts but must continue to the level of developing the willingness to be guests visiting other homes.

Finally, there are several recommendations to the Protestant Church in Maluku: The spirit of "orang basudara" must go beyond conceptual to practical in every level of living: (1) peace provocateur; being a provocateur for peace through social media, (2) campaign for peace journalism in Maluku, (3) developing theology (ecclesiology) of orang basudara as hospitality theology, (4) promoting art for peace (music, dance, photography, peace songs), (5) sermon of peace (created by pastor and ustadz), (6) interfaith youth camp, (7) sustainable peace dialogue (board game), (8) inter-scriptural reading (reading my neighbour scripture), (9) working together for peace through LGBTIQ and disability issue, (10) adding issues of reconciliation based on "orang basudara" (pro-life theology) to the Sunday school curriculum.

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DRUG ABUSE AND MISSION[1]

Van Tibus

1. Introduction

What is the worth of one human life? Can one individual's life be sacrificed for the sake of the community? How valuable is a person within society? These questions come sharply into focus as large numbers of people in the Philippines have been dying even before the pandemic, not by natural causes, but by the hand of its people. The culprit? The 'War on Drugs' – a major campaign promise by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. Garnering the greatest number of votes in the field of several candidates, the tough-talking former mayor captured the imagination of the Filipinos by supplying a solution to the drug abuse problem: kill the addicts[2]. What sends shivers up our spines is the undeniable reality that the war on drugs enjoys high approval ratings in the court of public opinion[3]. Is the problem of drug abuse so beyond redemption that killing drug users and addicts, really the best solution in this developing country? If the majority of the population is Christian, how come they have allowed this to happen? Has the Gospel integrated itself into our culture? To answer these questions, let us look at how Christianity came to the Philippines.

The Philippines was a steppingstone for First World Christian missionaries to Asia, especially to mainland China.[4] Spain was the first to colonise the coun-

1 This article is based on the author's dissertation entitled: Integral Mission and Drug Abuse in the Changing Landscape: Mobilizing the United Church of Christ in the Philippines "Together Towards Life".

2 Jayson S. Lamchek, A Mandate for Mass Killings? Public Support for Duterte's War on Drugs, in Nicole Curato (ed.): A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency. Manila: Ateneo De Manila University Press 2017, p. 199–218, here: 199.

3 Ronald D. Holmes, Who Supports Rodrigo Duterte? In: Nicole Curato (ed.), A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency, Manila: Ateneo De Manila University Press 2017, p. 37–76, here: 62–63.

4 The Age of Exploration of the 16th century has always been economically and theologically driven. With this concept of saving souls and the desire for economic expansion through colonies, the Christianisation of Asia began. For Spain, conquest of the Philippine Islands had three objectives: 1) joining the spice trade 2) jumping point to South Asia (China & Japan) & 3) countering the Muslim expansion. For the Americans, it was to the 'white man's burden' to give civilisation and has its own control of colonies. (Mariano C. Apilado, Revolutionary Spirituality: A study of the Protestant role in the American colonial rule in the Philippines, 1898–1928, Philippines: New Day Publishers 1999, p. 3).

try and fully integrated Roman Catholicism into the culture and, by the turn of the 20th century, the United States had brought American Evangelicalism. The Gospel has been sufficiently indigenised, yet it has manifested into a theology that deals with the theme of struggle[5]. For much of the history of the Filipino people, they have always been involved in a constant struggle to find their own identity, meaning and self-worth.

The search for their national identity has been prevalent, partly because these foreign cultures have always been imposed on them. It was only under the Spanish crown that they were forced into one country, named after the Spanish monarch, Philip II.[6] Its nationalist aspirations were stunted when its revolution for independence was thwarted, just short of victory, when the Spanish colonisers sold the country to the United States rather than face defeat at the hands of the Filipinos.[7] The Americans experimented on a country, fuelled by their faith and conviction to teach the country U.S. democratic and liberal ideals.[8] Because of the American presence, the country was dragged into World War II when the Japanese invaded and occupied the country for three years.[9] The Americans returned and reclaimed their colony, presenting themselves as saviours before granting the country independence. In truth, its governance and economy were closely tied to American interests.[10]

When Spain arrived in the country, it was the religious orders that carried out the work of presenting the Gospel to the natives. Protected by the Spanish crown, these religious orders reorganised the social setting of the country, establishing towns and urban centres that revolved around the church. With the Church acting as the centre of everyday life, it became a symbol of meaning and had an immense influence on Filipino culture[11]. Despite the external appearance of religious life, it also turned into yet another foreign influence and there was constant resistance, especially in the southern region of Mindanao. It remained Islamic and only the Americans were able to successfully subjugate the area.[12]

5 Anne Harris, The Theology of Struggle: Recognizing Its Place in Recent Philippine History. Kasarinlan, in: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies 21/2 (2007), p. 83–107, here: 84.

6 Richard Allen, A Short Introduction to the History and Politics of Southeast Asia, New York/N. Y: Oxford University Press 1970, p. 31.

7 D. R. SarDesai, Southeast Asia: Past & Present. 5th Edition, USA: Westview Press 2003, p. 155.

8 Apilado, Revolutionary Spirituality, p. 51.

9 David J. Steinberg, In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History, USA: University of Hawaii Press 1987, p. 433.

10 Richard Javad Heydarian, Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy, in: Asian Security 13/2 (2017), p. 220–236.

11 Sebastian Karotemprel, Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology, Bombay: Pauline Productions 1995, p. 193–194.

12 Daniel J. Ringuet, The Continuation of Civil Unrest and Poverty in Mindanao, Contemporary Southeast Asia 24/1 (2002), p. 33–49, here: 34–35.

Without a powerful sense of identity and meaning, this resulted in the search for self-worth. For some Filipinos this also leads to drug abuse. What makes this deadly is that it has penetrated politics and become a lucrative business and an attractive economic alternative for the poor[13]. Drug syndicates have close ties with politicians and the police, and has, therefore, become an ever-present issue among the people.[14] Crime related to drug abuse has long been a problem. And now, here comes Duterte and his radical solution to the drug problem. And the people voted him into office.

This is a challenge the Filipino people have to face. It boils down to how people, who use or abuse drugs, are perceived. It is a missiological challenge of how theology can be effective in mobilising the church to address the search for identity, meaning and self-worth for people abusing drugs. Looking at it from an ecclesiological perspective, this means asking: how does the Church, using postcolonial lenses, understand its role and contribution in society with regard to people abusing drugs? Ethically, this means asking: how can the Church be a force in the redemption of people, who abuse drugs, particularly in the context of the government's War on Drugs campaign? To answer these questions, we are going to use the Critical Realism Theory as a framework to unpack the issues and find casual mechanisms, in the hope of having a transformation in Philippine society with regard to drug abuse.

2. Critical Realism Theory

According to critical realism, there are three levels of reality: the empirical level; the actual level; and the real level.[15]

On the empirical level, these are the experienced and observed events. It is also where these events are understood through human interpretation. And the level, where scientific endeavours operate as they observe and quantify data and interpret them. Yet this is not only the level of reality.

13 Gideon Lasco, Kalaban: Young drug users' engagements with law enforcement in the Philippines in: International Journal of Drug Policy 52 (2018), p. 39–44, here: 40.

14 Dennis F. Quilala, The Philippines in 2014: Unmasking the daang matuwid, in: Philippine Political Science Quarterly 36/1 (2015), p. 94–109, here: 98.

15 While there are three levels of reality it does not mean they are independent of one another. 'The nature of the depth realism proposed in critical realism suggests that the real, the actual and the empirical make up three overlapping domains of reality.' (Denise E. de Souza, Culture, Context and Society: The underexplored potential of critical realism as a philosophical framework for theory and practice, in: Asian Journal of Social Psychology 17/2 [2014], p. 141–151, here: 142) It provides an open system where the complexity of phenomenon is not actually being precisely observed by the empirical observation. It gives room for fallibility when an explanation may be true for a time but may be replaced by a more complete explanation later.

The next level is the actual level, where events occur, regardless of whether they are observed or not. This is the level, where events, without being observed, are actually happening, pointing to the fact that this level of reality is independent of any observer. The actual level is the reality that science is still trying to discover or interpret. At this level, whether the interpretation is precise or not, it still happens.

The final level, or ground level, is the real level. It is where casual mechanisms within objects or structures cause events to occur at the empirical level. To illustrate this point: gravity is the causal mechanism or force that makes objects fall. The real level is the base of all realities and are the things that make the actual and real levels occur.

Critical realism does not even limit itself in the discussion to a stratified reality but even touches on the fact that knowledge, itself, is stratified.[16] This means that even at the epistemological level, the way we observe and interpret reality is itself stratified. How we gain knowledge is, itself, based on our sense of experience. This goes against the western framework of generalisation and allows a paradigm shift of what lens we are using in interpreting reality. This is fundamentally important since the western framework in the modern era has dismissed a great deal of knowledge that is not empirically verifiable.

Concepts such as spirituality, ignored in the scientific outlook, now have a space in the critical realist viewpoint.[17] Because so many people believe in spirituality, especially in the field of religion, critical realism allows it to be considered and even included in its analysis. Again, knowledge is stratified and spirituality is also included in the body of knowledge. This is helpful, especially in this article since the Church's understanding of itself and God's mission, which is often labelled spiritual, is a factor in its mobilisation.

What makes critical realism effective is its openness for improvement instead of dealing with absolutes. This is true in open systems, in contrast to a controlled environment, in which so many factors are involved for a phenomenon to happen. Although critical realism is not absolute, it does contribute to knowledge by looking at the causal mechanisms that make events happen.[18] Through this examination of root causes, then, there is a need for intervention to happen, especially in making transformations in social reality. Human agency, when informed of these causal mechanisms, can make a deliberate effort for change.[19]

16 De Souza, Culture, p. 142.
17 Peter McGhee / Patricia Grant, Applying critical realism in spirituality at work research, in: Management Research Review 40/8 (2017), p. 845–869, here: 849.
18 Fletcher 2017, p. 188.
19 De Souza, Culture, p. 148.

Critical realism levels of reality and knowledge allow theology to have a conversation and use the methods of science. In this article, a model of integral mission is offered as an intervention in the reality of drug abuse in the Philippines. When churches are aware of the invitation of God in his mission with people, who abuse drugs, this allows for reflexivity and exercises their agency to transform the situation.

Critics believe that Duterte has successfully made the drug issue a matter of national security that allowed him to win the presidency. By taking advantage of the public's fear of drugs, Duterte was able to effectively present himself as a man of action, who would do whatever it takes to solve the problem. This is reflected in the consistency of his high approval ratings among the public. By using critical realism as a tool of analysis, let us begin with the empirical reality, starting with the numbers of casualties in the War on Drugs.

In a government infographic[20] between 1st July 2016 and 28th February 2022, a total of 229,868 anti-drug operations were conducted and 331,694 'drug personalities' were arrested. It is an impressive number considering the emphasis of the current government on the drug menace. What is interesting is that of all these operations, the government claims that only 6,235 people linked to drug offences died in anti-drug operations. Two questions that have to be answered are: how did the government come up with these numbers and does the empirical data represent the actual reality of the lives lost in the War on Drugs?

Looking at government data, a study from the Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) produced a much higher casualty rate. Focusing on three urban cities in Manila, Caloocan and Quezon City for the period from July 2016 to December 2017, this report concludes: 'The documented total and our estimate are considerably greater than the count provided by police: we estimate that the true number of drug-related killings is approximately 2.94 times greater than what the police reported'.[21] This report compares data sets from police blotters, reports from news, churches, non-governmental organisations and human rights groups. By comparing several data sets and using the multiple systems estimation statistical method, this shows a substantial number of unreported cases. Considering that the HRDAG report covered a period of only 17 months compared to the government statistics, which covered a period of 27 months – in other words, 10 months more than the HRDAG research – the government figure is indeed lower.

20 This has been the information tool by the government to present the on-the-ground figures in the state's effort in the war on drugs. Please visit the website: https://pdea.gov.ph/2-uncategorized/279-realnumbersph (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency 2022).

21 Patrick Ball / Sheila Coronel, et al, Drug-Related Killings in the Philippines (2019), p. 2, https://hrdag.org/publications-year/2019/ [Accessed 2019, July 26].

This study is important, since it proposes that, what the government presents as raw data, is not the actual reality. It is nearly impossible to document every drug-related killing, which gives credence to the critical realism approach that not all empirical data accurately reflects reality. By taking account of the unreported cases of drug-related killings, the figure provided by the HRDAG closely corresponds to the actual number of drug-related killings. If this is projected nationwide, with a total of 122 cities[22], the government estimate of drug-related killings is conservative, to say the least, since the HRDAG study ended only in December 2017. While the human rights group has only an estimate compared to government data, its analysis is valid, and one must seriously consider that drug killings could be higher.

Another independent study that focused on the media reports of the killings from 10th May 2016 to 29th September 2017 had a figure of 5,021 deaths.[23] While the research has been dealing with secondary data from the media reports, its number is higher than the official government figure based on the same time frame. The research justified their dependence on media reports, since they encountered contradictory data from government sources. 'The wide ranges in estimates of the death toll in the anti-drug campaign are largely the result of an opaque system of collecting government data and statistics'[24]. I have reservations about depending on secondary information regarding the number of deaths related to the drug war for the following reasons. Firstly, it presents a conservative number, since it only relies on the deaths that are reported in the media. Secondly, it concentrates on cities that have a strong media presence and do not reflect the actual reality in rural areas. This has been reflected in the study, since the National Capital Region recorded the highest number of deaths.[25] Yet, despite all these shortcomings, the fact that their reported numbers are higher than the government figures reflects the reality of the effect of drugs on society. Unfortunately, the focus is more on the method employed by the government in the War on Drugs. 'This attention has been less on the issue of drugs and more on how the policy has been implemented'.[26] It is, therefore, important that this article focuses on the victims of drug abuse, the powerlessness brought upon them by drugs and how the Church can be mobilised to address this.

22 This is according to the Department of Health website https://www.doh.gov.ph/node/1409.

23 Jenna Mae L. Atun / Ronald U. Mendoza, et al., The Philippines' antidrug campaign: Spatial and temporal patterns of killings linked to drugs, in: International Journal of Drug Policy 73 (2019), p. 100–111, here: 100.

24 Ibid. p. 102.

25 Ibid. p. 105.

26 Ibid. p. 110.

Yet, despite being presented with a clear analysis and evidence of the rising death toll in the war on drugs, why is there still such tremendous support for the state policy? These issues are raised because they are valid. If the Church is to be effective mobilised to carry out a mission to victims of drug abuse, it needs to understand the current attitude of the people.

In this section, we have attempted to present the two levels of reality with respect to the issue of drug abuse in the Philippines. The empirical reality shows a modest number of official statistics but points to the most likely possibility of a higher death count. The government, through the ascendancy of Duterte to the highest position, has successfully prioritised the issue of illegal drugs as a menace to society and ensured that it remains a popular issue. The President has successfully convinced the people of the primacy of stopping the illegal drug trade to provide law and order in society. Yet there are still problematic issues with this narrative, since the drug war has been using extrajudicial methods.[27] Paradoxically, this is supported by the people and this is the actual reality as proved by surveys and the attitudes of the people.[28]

The troubling fact of the continued support of the War on Drugs, despite the reality that there is a probability that innocent people are being killed and that the punishment for the crime is unjust. Based on the studies, it is actual reality that support for the campaign is high. For this reason, there is a need to go deeper into the real level to find out why the Duterte administration has successfully dehumanised people using and abusing drugs. Even the Church, which is supposed to be the source of morality in a predominantly Christian nation, has been ineffective in countering this narrative. There is an explanation for this contradiction if one digs deeper into the historical and colonial context of the country. 'One way to understand Duterte's rise to power is to situate it within the history of Philippine state-formation, seen as an elaboration of a process of counter-insurgency. This means that the state is founded not only on its repression of those it deems subversive; it also depends on the active collaboration of its citizens to carry out this repression.'[29]

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27 David T. Johnson / Jon Fernquest, Governing through Killing: The War on Drugs in the Philippines, in: Asian Journal of Law & Society 5/2 (2018), p. 359–390, here: 834.

28 There is no united opposition to the narrative as even the churches, which are supposed to be the moral compass, have religious motivation to support the campaign. It has been seen as God's judgement on the wicked. (Jayeel Cornelio / Erron Medina, Christianity and Duterte's War on Drugs in the Philippines, in: Politics Religion & Ideology 20/2 [2019], p. 151–169, here: 160–161). Even with their condemnation of the killings and the rising body count, it has not stopped the state in using deadly force to continue the drug war.

29 Vicente L. Rafael, The Sovereign Trickster, in: Journal of Asian Studies 78/1 (2010), p. 141–166, here: 146.

As we dig deeper, we can infer that years of colonisation have disempowered the Filipino identity and that the issue of powerlessness is the real issue of contemporary drug abuse. Centuries of Spanish influence have penetrated the culture. The religious institution of the Roman Catholic Church has enabled the enforcement of a western type of Christianity on the people. It is ironic that the Kingdom of God, preached by Jesus, was presented to the Filipinos in the form of an alliance between the spiritual Roman Catholic Church and the political might of the Spanish monarchy. Even if maintaining the colony in the Philippines was a costly affair, this was because it was the religious orders that insisted on a presence on the islands.[30]

Pockets of resistance, particularly by the more organised Muslims in Mindanao, managed to keep the Spaniards at bay. As noted in the brief history of narcotics, resistance even consisted of the intake of opium in their attacks against Spanish soldiers.[31] This was also at a time when Spain was establishing an alternative trade route to Asia and Chinese immigrants were coming more regularly, although they had been in the Philippines before the European power. Although it is not conclusive that narcotics arrived in the Philippines through the colonisers, there is a strong possibility that this was the case, an indication of which is the absence of pre-Hispanic terms for these substances.[32] The search for independence and the source of power has always eluded the people. Taking addictive substances could be a form of resistance and rebellion in their frustrated search for power.

The arrival of the Americans only further complicated the powerlessness of the Filipinos. Just when they had reached the point of achieving independence, the Americans decided, for themselves, that the people were not ready for self-governance.[33] They wanted to teach them the American style of democracy. In the course of educating them, they enforced the prohibition of opium, which only succeeded in driving the industry underground.[34] And the American-style education only further confused their national identity and dependency and increased the populace's sense of powerlessness.[35] The more the country was gripped by powerlessness, the more the people wanted to look for alternative ways to achieve power. Drugs that had gone underground, became a viable

30 Hugh Thomas, World without End: Spain, Philip II, and the first Global Empire, New York Penguin Random House 2014, p. 246–245.

31 Ricardo M. Zarco, A Short History of Narcotic Drug Addiction in the Philippines, 1521–1959, in: Philippine Sociological Review 43/1 (1995), p. 1–15, here: 3.

32 Ibid, p. 2.

33 Barrows, 2011, p. 293–296.

34 Daniel J. Wertz, Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism: Opium Politics in the Colonial Philippines, 1898–1925, in: Modern Asian Studies 47/2 (2013), p. 467–499.

35 Johnson/Fernquest, Killing, p. 377.

choice, especially for those vulnerable on account of their powerlessness. That is why the problem of drug abuse exists. This provided fertile ground for a leader like Duterte, who promised to eradicate the problem of drug abuse. However, his solution has resulted in killing the country's own citizens. It does not address the root cause of drug abuse: powerlessness.

3. Healing of the demoniac in Gerasene

Because we are looking at the War on Drugs through the lens of the critical realism paradigm, we can clearly arrive at the conclusion that the causal mechanism of colonialism is a major contributor to the problem of drug abuse in the country. As a result of colonialism, identity, meaning and self-worth are core issues that brought some of the population to abuse drugs. The Church has been effectively side-lined in public discourse on the issue of drug abuse, because of its role during the colonial period. It needs to approach the issue at a self-reflective level to push for transformation in society.

Theological reflection on the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26–39 captures a solid biblical and theological foundation to mobilise the Church to carry out its mission to drug users. It requires a postcolonial reading[36] regarding how to minister to people using drugs. Aside from the postcolonial reading of the text, I would also attempt to relate demon-possession to the contemporary situation of the psychological, behavioural and even spiritual damage resulting from being socially outcast, something experienced by prisoners in solitary confinement.[37] Finally, I would also point out that the healing of the demoniac became an act of witness to the demoniac's own community and a step towards the liberating transformation of society.

A postcolonial reading of the biblical text is required, since elements of colonialism are present in the text. The setting of the story in Gerasene is, itself, a place, where the imperial power of Rome is felt, even though it is not part of the Jewish community. The presence and prominence of pigs in the community's economy clearly shows its predominant Gentile culture and territory. The demoniac's name, 'Legion' (Luke 8:30), is also an oblique reference to the

36 The exegesis of Elizabeth Arnold and James Connell is very helpful in extracting colonial images in this text. Both scholars linked the man's situation to the demon's name 'Legion', the loss of one's own voice, and the inhumane living condition as an outcast (Elizabeth Arnold / James McConnell, Hijacked Humanity: A postcolonial reading of Luke 8:26–39, in: Review & Expositor 112/4 [2015], p. 591–606, here: 597–598).

37 Luis Menéndez-Antuña, Of Social Death and Solitary Confinement: The Political Life of a Gerasene (Luke 8:26–39), in: Journal of Biblical Literature 138/3 (2019), p. 643–664, here: 650.

military-industrial complex of Rome, since a legion is also a battalion of Roman soldiers. The fact that Jesus and his disciples crossed the lake to reach Gerasene shows the intention of Jesus to reach out to this man. Jesus and his disciples had to pass through a storm on the lake to reach this one person in Gerasene (Luke 8:22–25). The community's rejection of Jesus' presence paved the way for the healed person to become a witness to God's salvific act. These are just the things I would point out using the postcolonial reading of the text.[38]

Although demon possession could be interpreted in diverse ways, I would like to use the hermeneutical approach of phenomenology, linking it to the contemporary situation of people in solitary confinement. In a sense, being an outcast of society on the grounds of immoral behaviour and being subjected to extreme isolation is exactly what is happening to this person in the biblical text. According to this Lukan account, he was behaving more like a beast than a person. He was naked, living in the cemetery among the dead. He had been 'chained hand and foot' to subdue him, yet he was able to break free through the demonic powers that drove him. He was free of the chains when the demons begged Jesus to allow them to go to the pigs. When the demons came out of the man, he was in his right mind and fully clothed. He wanted to go with Jesus but Jesus told him to go home and proclaim how God had healed him.

Finally, we look at the community, in which the demon-possessed man was living. The community knew the man, of course, but his depraved situation, brought about by his demon possession, forced them to cast him out. The attempts to put him in chains are the community's efforts to control him or subdue him. However, their efforts were in vain, since the man managed to break free and he was left on his own to live in tombs. The community was more concerned about the pigs that had drowned than about the healing of the man. The loss of the pigs was a terrible economic blow for them, and they begged Jesus to leave their place. It appears that fear was the prevalent emotion instead of rejoicing at the miracle Jesus had performed.

This biblical text closely relates to the Philippine situation. The setting of imperial power dominates the economy and the culture of an area. It relates well to the Philippines, a country colonised by two imperialist powers. They feel the effects of cultural domination as a result of Spanish [39]influence and economic dependence on U.S. interests. Gerasene from Luke 8 can be interpreted as the Philippines, today, under cultural, military and economic subjugation.

38 Arnold / McConnell, Humanity, p. 592.

39 Van C. M Tibus, A Missiological Study of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in its Constitution and General Assembly Documents, Unpublished master's thesis, Dumaguete, Philippines: Silliman University 2017, p. 113–114.

The demon-possessed man is a metaphor for the drug addicts, who are social outcasts. The War on Drugs is the Philippines' efforts to chain, subdue or even kill in the attempt to control the phenomenon. Yet this effort does not address the issue and, thus, the problem remains – uncontrolled and just out of sight, like the demon-possessed man living outside society in the tombs. For the Church that claims Jesus as the head of the Church, the lesson here is that it should follow Jesus' approach to healing the man possessed by demons. The man became God's witness and instrument to liberate the whole community. If transformation is to take place in Philippine society with regard to people using and addicted to drugs, the Church needs to follow how Christ acted in this Bible story.

4. Integral Mission

What kind of intervention, then, is required by the Church to minister to people addicted to drugs? What is the framework of the missiological lens needed for this issue? The missiological concept of 'Integral Mission'[40] is, I believe, the best framework to be applied in the Philippine context. There are two major reasons for doing so. Firstly, this framework comes from Latin America, a region with many similarities with the Philippine situation: a former Spanish colony coupled with strong American pressure. Its outlook on the redemption of God's creation encompasses both the material and the spiritual perspectives as a means of balancing the evangelical and ecumenical outlook. My church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, has both evangelical and ecumenical traditions embedded in its founding.

Secondly, the current theology of struggle in the Philippines lacks the soteriological emphasis from the evangelical outlook. Using the analogy of the healing of the demoniac, the theology of struggle is limited to the situation of the demoniac seeking liberation. Integral Mission's emphasis on the salvific act of God for the total redemption of all creation, answers the call for people using and abusing drugs to seek redemption. If we are to put the UCCP into the biblical story in Luke 8, some disciples, after surviving the storm on the lake, went with Jesus to redeem one man. Instead of being in the situation of the demoniac seeking redemption, the Church, now, becomes the disciples learning at Jesus'

40 Rene Padilla, a Latin American theologian, has proposed a holistic view of mission. After experiencing the shortcomings of liberation theology in his evangelical tradition, he coined the term Integral Mission. It has a strong emphasis on soteriology that includes the spiritual and physical dimensions of the whole creation. (C. René Padilla, Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom, Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Monographs 2001, p. 27–29).

feet. The act of being out of their comfort zone to address the cry for the redemption of a marginalised sector of society: the people addicted to drugs.

Using Integral Mission as the paradigm to carry out mission to people addicted to drugs, this mobilises the church – specifically my church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Using the lens provided by critical realism theory to interpret the Philippine situation of drug abuse allows the theological beliefs of the Church to contribute to the public discourse and be agents of transformation. It acknowledges the colonial mindset of Christian missionaries in influencing our perspective in dealing with drug addicts. Integral Mission allows us to go beyond government rhetoric of killing drug addicts and see them as being in need of redemption. People using and abusing drugs are casualties of demonic societal structures, which render them powerless and in constant bondage. The Church should minister to them by exorcising them of demonic influences, in other words drugs, and the societal structures that keep them in bondage. Up to now, secular and government efforts to rehabilitate drug addicts have lacked the required human and theological resources. Drug addicts may be cleansed from the biological influences of illegal drugs. But there is also a lack of effort to provide spiritual and community support. The Church, as a redemptive community, can open its arms to assist the government's rehabilitation efforts. The Church can also provide spiritual and emotional resources in the rehabilitative process. This can only be done if the Church engages in a process of self-reflection on crossing boundaries to answer the cry of redemption from drug addicts.

Dismantling the societal structures that bring about drug abuse is a task the Church cannot undertake alone. Yet, like Jesus, who, rejected by the Gerasene community, gave the task of witnessing to the healed demoniac. He/she is the best witness of God's redemption for the conversion of his community. In that sense, I believe that with regard to the Philippine situation with drug abuse, the redemption of these people is a viable solution to dismantling the societal structures that bring about drug abuse.

5. Recommendations

What, then, is the recommendation for the wider UEM communion? While each church is also challenged by the issue of drug abuse in their respective countries, the root cause of powerlessness felt by marginalised groups is real.

These are the recommendations I would make to the church, especially to the UCCP:

- It is time for the churches to move out of their comfort zones to answer the call of these disempowered people. Churches should be like the disciples following Jesus in crossing boundaries to reach out to even the least of these.
- The need to emphasize the soteriological value of the gospel of the whole created order holistically not only spiritually. The ministry of Jesus shows the Gospel's redemptive and empowering message of God's love. These people, like the healed demoniac, people overcoming their addiction, or any other empowered marginalised group, can be powerful witnesses to the redemptive act of God.
- Using the resources of the church to contribute to the betterment of society, especially the marginalized. By using the Church's theological and community resources we can contribute to the greater good of society by addressing the needs of those who are below. Using critical realism in analysing the problems of society, we can offer Diakonia in following the footsteps of Jesus, the head of the church.
- The cohesiveness of the preaching, teaching, and healing ministries of the church. The Protestant missionaries of the UCCP have established not only churches but also schools and hospitals to care for the needs of the Filipino people. The UCCP has to retain the holistic vision and mission of our forbearers and expressed in the preaching, teaching, and healing ministries.
- Being aware of the colonial past of our Christian history that was based on the western ideological framework and contextualizing the gospel to the Filipino people. By understanding the powerlessness felt by the Filipino psyche the church is tasked to proclaim the liberating and empowering message of the gospel.
- Acknowledge the presence of the ecumenical and evangelical tradition of the UCCP. There is a need to harmonize these traditions and use the strength of each perspective to work together to address the need of society and participate in the mission of God.
- Approach the issue of the War on Drugs not ideologically or politically but theologically, based on the understanding of God's mission. When the UCCP understands God's desire to save everyone, this is the foundation of how the church can address the need of people under drug abuse to come back to God.
- Mobilize the entire church, not only the leaders, to participate in God's mission. We need to have a comprehensive program that would require members who are experts in the field of rehabilitative therapy, counselling, medicine, and other relevant fields in addressing the powerlessness of people that lead to drug addiction.

– Aim that every UCCP local church in the country can become a redemptive community and support group for persons who have overcome drug addiction.
– Work with government agencies and non-government organizations that rehabilitate people under drug abuse to overcome their addiction.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Encouraging Young People to Fight against Discrimination, Exclusion and Violence

Danar Sri Wijayanti

1. Introduction

Having previously been involved in some UEM events, I strongly believe that we should live together in harmony in spite of the diversity in social background, race, religion and belief. Differences are enriching, motivating us to learn from, and respect, each other. We should thank God for the beauty of diversity on earth, including differences in faith. That is what I learned from my participation in some UEM events, particularly in the International Interfaith Dialogue held in Balewiyata, Malang in July 2007. Living in the Ngalah Islamic Boarding School *(Pondok Pesantren)* for several days, was such an unforgettable experience. Romo Kyai Soleh, the Imam of the *pesantren*, welcomed us warmly into an atmosphere of sisterhood. All the *santri*[1] were very friendly. We shared rooms and lived together like sisters. It is nice to be roommates somewhere with such a warm-hearted family. We were also invited to visit the Islamic school. Both teachers and students gave a warm greeting to the participants of the International Interfaith Dialogue. The spirit of sisterhood has remained. Romo Kyai Soleh, the contact person for the *Pesantren*, texts me every Christmas to wish us Christians a Merry Christmas and to keep the spirit of sisterhood alive. It has become an annual habit for us and something we maintain. We do the same at Eid Mubarak. I never experience Eid Mubarak now without texting the contact person of the *Pesantren*, to wish them a joyful Eid Mubarak.

I used to live in a small village in Central Java, Indonesia, where people from different religions live together in harmony. The local people have a strong sense of togetherness, regardless of their different religions. The majority are Muslim, but there are also a few Christians and Buddhists. We get along with people

1 Students at the Islamic Boarding School.

from different religions very well. For example, we always invite neighbours from different religions when we celebrate Christmas at church, and they always respond positively to the invitation. The same thing goes for Christians on Eid Mubarak day, which is not only celebrated by Muslims. All local people celebrate Eid Mubarak by visiting each other.

In my family, we have also celebrated Eid Mubarak, particularly when my grandmother was still alive. She was a Christian, who believed in Jesus. Both her son and her son-in-law were Christian priests. But for her, Eid Mubarak was the day she most looked forward to. Instead of saving money to buy new clothes for Christmas, she always made sure that she prepared a new *kebaya* for Eid Mubarak. On Eid Mubarak day, itself, my grandmother dressed up in her *kebaya*, which is a traditional Javanese custom for women. She would wait in the living room, making sure that all the snacks and drinks were prepared, and she would not miss anyone who came to ask for blessings.

When our Muslim neighbours finished the Eid Prayer, our house was the first house they would visit, as my grandmother was the oldest person in the village. We continued opening the house for a week, and people came to see her. On Eid Mubarak 2017, she kindly said that it would be her last Eid Mubarak. My grandmother passed away only two months later. Yet, we continued celebrating Eid Mubarak together, all of us happy to do so with our Muslim neighbours. We genuinely lived in harmony, standing up for religious diversity as a positive reality that enriches humanity.

However, the harmonious life I have been living does not appear to correspond with the reality of the outside world, which I started to experience when I lived somewhere else. People tend to be strongly prejudiced against others, particularly those with different religions. Hatred and prejudice are especially evident in social media, where people are free to express insensitive abusive comments. Acknowledging the disharmony between religions in current times, particularly in this global era, in which social media has taken on such a vital role, this paper seeks to encourage the UEM Youth to play an active role in deradicalisation and develop the spirit of pluralism through social media.

2. Living in harmony: a gap between pluralists and intolerant people

The beautiful harmony I had experienced both in my local area and in the UEM community does not correspond with what I experienced when I moved to live in Depok, West Java. I moved there temporarily when I had decided to take up

the UEM scholarship for a master's degree in Linguistics in 2010. It was a dream come true, being able to continue my studies at the University of Indonesia, the most reputable university in the country. However, I did not expect to experience such discrimination and exclusion on the basis of my religion. But it happened. It was shocking for me, as it taught me so many lessons about the reality of such religious discrimination and exclusion. The most unforgettable experience was when I booked a massage therapist to come to my room. She was a woman in her mid- thirties, very neat and friendly in her *hijab.* She looked like a very religious, wise woman. I welcomed her nicely and we had exchanged a few words before the massage started. She talked much about her daily routine as a Muslim woman and I listened patiently, not only because I am a good listener but also because I really respect other people's religion. We quickly became good friends and she was happy to ask me to send her English exercises when she found out I was an English teacher. I was happy to help and I promised her to send some question sheets.

She kept talking about religion during the massage but this was no problem at all for me. Until finally, when the massage was about to end, she asked me the *qibla direction* [the direction to face to perform prayers]. I was confused, and I just said I was sorry, but I had no idea about the qibla direction because I was not a Muslim. She looked shocked when I revealed I was a Christian. I could see the prejudice in her eyes. She suddenly had no interest in talking to me and was in a rush to leave my room when the massage ended. And when I asked her where I should send the English exercises she refused to tell me. She said she would no longer need my help. And her body language clearly demonstrated that she had no interest in continuing her friendship with me.

I had no idea what was going on. Was there something wrong about being a Christian? I could not understand why she had such a strong prejudice against Christians or why she refused to make friends exactly at the moment she discovered I was Christian. I could not figure out why she was so different from other Muslims I had met, both in my village and at the UEM Interfaith Dialogue event. In contrast to this kind of rude behaviour, the Muslims I used to know were friendly and dealt with me in a spirit of sisterhood.

The first-time experience of dealing with such exclusion was quickly followed by another. One day, a friend invited me to live in a boarding house next to her house. She was happy about the idea of me moving closer to where she lived. I agreed without thinking much about it. The following week, she suddenly said she was very sorry to say that I could not move in and live there, because her neighbours strongly disagreed about having a Christian living near them. Since this was the second time I had experienced exclusion and discrimination, I was

not as shocked as the first time. And I was no longer shocked when most of my classmates did not wish the Christians a merry Christmas, since they were forbidden to do so.

I started to become aware of the danger of radicalism. It could lead to people being brainwashed and start believing that people with a different religion must be regarded as enemies. My real life experience interacting with people who do not welcome pluralism led me to observe how people interact in online social media or other online platforms that tend to give people more space to express themselves without being as inhibited as they would be in face-to-face interactions. I started observing how people from different religions interact in online social media platforms, and to take note of comments that *netizens* write on any issue in these platforms, particularly in Christian-related content. I noticed that there were a lot of comments expressing hatred of Christianity. I, therefore, started to realise that radicalism was more dangerous than I had previously thought. Many intolerant people misunderstood Christianity and have internalised hatred of Christians simply because they have no understanding of the Christian concept of God. As a result, they regard Christians as *kufr* or *kafir* (unbeliever/infidel) because they reject the concept of the Trinity.

3. Discrimination and exclusion on the basis of religion leads to violence

I learned to understand that not all people are aware of radicalism. Similarly, not all people welcome pluralism. I then noticed that the atmosphere, in which I had grown up, was very different from that of the people, who were not open-minded to the beauty of difference. I grew up in Salatiga, a small town in Central Java in Indonesia, which is regarded as the most tolerant province in Indonesia (Setara Institute, February 2021)[2]. There are many churches in Salatiga, and we live in harmony. This spirit of harmony is demonstrated at our annual Christmas celebration in Pancasila Square, an important location in Salatiga. When local Christians celebrate Christmas, early in the morning of 25th December (before the Covid-19 outbreak), our Muslim brothers and sisters show their sincere solidarity to actively take part to secure the event. Similarly, when Muslims say their Eid prayer on Eid Mubarak Day, the young people from some churches also take part to secure the event.

2 Based on research done by Setara Institute, https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2021/02/26/setara-institute-salatiga-kota-paling-toleran-di-indonesia-2020.

This is different from some other areas in Indonesia, where people do not welcome Christians. We can see how difficult it is to build a church in other areas. Some Christians have to contend with strong opposition when they try to build a church. Data published by the Setara Institute records that between 2007 and 2018, 199 churches were rejected by the surrounding community. This included the case of the GKI Yasmin and HKBP Filadelfia churches, which attracted so much public attention. GKI Yasmin was closed by the Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) on 10th April 2010[3] at the instruction of the local government. Diani Budiarto, Mayor of Bogor, withdrew the construction permit to build the church at that time. The HKBP Filadelfia in Bekasi also experienced the same thing. Furthermore, in 2019, The GPDi Efata Keritang, in the Indragiri Hilir District of Riau Province was forced to stop their Sunday services.[4] Rev. Damiana Siaga was preaching about love when the Public Order Agency *(Satpol PP)* interrupted worship and forced them to stop. Serti Pandiangan, the wife of the priest, kneeled down in front of the Satpol PP officials asking them to wait until the service was finished, but they insisted on stopping it immediately. These are only some examples of how difficult it is to be a minority in a community, in which people hold and exhibit such strong hatred of, and prejudice against, Christians.

Exclusion and discrimination are not limited to difficulties in being granted a construction permit to build a church. Recently, people in Indonesia were shocked about the obligation imposed on all students, including Christians, to wear the hijab at one of the state schools in Indonesia. This became headline news in January 2021. Permadi Arya, one of the most influential social media influencers in Indonesia brought the news to the public's attention through his Instagram account: @permadiaktivis2. The news became viral and people started to realise the injustice of the situation. After it became viral on social media, the school principal made a public apology. The Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, quickly responded by announcing that schools were not permitted to force students to wear religious costumes. We thank God for our leaders for bringing justice to the minority, even if has meant that our government is condemned as a sinful regime by intolerant people.

The exclusion and discrimination led to violence. Recently, on Sunday, 28th March 2021, a bomb exploded at the Cathedral Church in Makassar, South Sulawesi. The bombing was carried out by a husband and wife, when church members were attending Sunday worship. Some months ago, on Friday 27th November 2020, terrorists from the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), part of ISIS Poso,

3 https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1308337/wali-kota-bogor-janji-kasus-gki-yasmin-selesai-medio-2020.

4 https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-49494326.

killed four of God's servants in Sigi, Central Sulawesi[5]. Permadi Arya, a Muslim activist who defends Christians as a minority, stated that terrorist attacks against churches appeared to be part of the terrorists' annual agenda, since it seems to happen nearly every year in Indonesia[6]. He revealed further data, such as the terror attack on three churches in Surabaya in 2018. The attack, carried about by a terrorist family, killed 18 people. In 2017, people were shocked by the march to the church of Santa Clara, which led to a clash. The march was instigated by the FPI (Front Pembela Islam)[7], which objected to the existence of the church. The FPI was classified as an illegal organisation by the government on 30th December 2020. In 2016, a Molotov cocktail hit a church in Samarinda, killing a child and causing another child to have permanent disabilities. In 2015, a church in Aceh Singkil was set on fire, leading to a clash that killed two people. In 2013, three churches in Makassar were hit by Molotov cocktails. Terrorists attacked three churches in just one night. In 2011, a suicide bombing at a church in Solo killed one person and injured 28 others. These are just some examples of how church bombing is an urgent issue in Indonesia.

Despite this, we still thank God for moderate Muslims such as the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Since church bombing had become such an important issue, the leader of the GP Anshor (youth movement) instructed Banser (an Islamic militia organisation) to help the police secure the church at Christmas. People still remember how Riyanto, a Banser, died tragically on Christmas Eve in 2000. He was on duty to provide security on Christmas Eve at the Eben Haezer Church in Mojokerto, East Java. He died saving Christian worshippers. Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur) stated that Riyanto was a religious person, rich in human values[8]. We need more people like the Nadhdlatul Ulama, who value humanity and are willing to work together with different religions. Indonesia and the whole world need more moderate Muslims like Nahdlatul Ulama, who are open to other religions and have universal values of humanity.

5 https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/11/29/four-killed-in-alleged-mit-attack-in-sigi-reigniting-concerns-over-sectarian-conflict.html.

6 Abu Janda VLOG youtube channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_LYUSV4588&t=43s.

7 Based on https://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/front-pembela-islam-islamic-defenders-front-fpi, FPI is a domestic Indonesian terrorist organisation, whose goal is the implementation of Shari'ah in Indonesia.

8 https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/72965/kisah-banser-riyanto-meninggal-demi-kemanusiaan-iwSRn

4. Prejudice against Christianity and how to counteract it

Prejudice against Christianity has its roots in an erroneous concept of the Trinity. Extremists argued that Christianity is wrong, since Christians have three gods. This is the basic teaching of radicalism, which incites hatred and prejudice, and leads its followers to perpetrate exclusion, discrimination and violence, even refusing to greet Christians at Christmas, regarding them as *kafir* (infidel/unbeliever), but also by making it difficult for Christians to get a construction permit to build a church, and going as far as church bombings. Of course, it is not true that Christians have three gods, and it is also not true that God gave birth, biologically, to a son. As a Christian, it is necessary to understand the concept of the Trinity, as well as understand how the Quran verses propounded by extremists can mislead ordinary people. To facilitate understanding of this topic, it is particularly important for Christian youth to actively take part in deradicalisation. Furthermore, I think there are many moderate Muslims in Indonesia, who are vulnerable to radicalism. That is why we should work together with our Muslim brothers and sisters to fight against the radicalism, which leads to the exclusion and discrimination of the minority. When we have knowledge of the specific verses, which extremists often use to promote radicalism, we will be able to actively be the salt of the earth, enlightening others and bringing peace.

Bambang Noorsena (2020), in his YouTube Channel[9], argued that the Quran does not oppose the Trinity. One of the Quran verses that has been discussed by Bambang Noorsena on his Youtube Channel is An-Nisa171. He had noticed many intolerant religious leaders preaching on these verses on TV and social media. As a result, Muslim brothers and sisters are afraid to greet Christians on Christmas. Bambang Noorsena expressed his concern about the harmony between people of different religions that has been created over such a long period and, nowadays, is suddenly disturbed by a *fatwa*[10] stating that it is forbidden to say merry Christmas. However, Bambang Noorsena argued that the verses quoted by these religious leaders are not addressed to Christianity:

> "People of the Book! Do not go to extremes regarding your faith; say nothing about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger of Allah and the fulfilment of His Word through Mary and a spirit 'created by a command' from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers and do not say, 'Trinity'. Stop! – for your own

9 Bambang Noorsena Youtube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGzAM4ahQS8&t=883s.

10 A binding ruling in religious matters.

good. Allah is only One God. Glory be to Him! He is far above having a son! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And Allah is sufficient as a Trustee of Affairs." (Surah An-Nisa 172, Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran)[11]

Bambang Noorsena stated that what Christians believe is in line with what Muslims believe: that God does not have a biological son. He argued that Christians believe in Jesus, as the Son of God, but not as a biological son (the Arabic term *walad* – offspring, is not in line with the Christian faith). The term Son of God in Christianity refers to Jesus as the Word of God. It does not mean that God has a biological son. Furthermore, Bambang Noorsena argued that because Christians, in theological terms, understand God as Trinity, does not mean that we have three gods. According to him, the Son of God is God's Word. And God's Word cannot be separated from God. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is the spirit of God, and God cannot be separated from His Spirit. Furthermore, it is a metaphysical concept, which we should try to understand is beyond our human logic. Therefore, the Trinity is not three separate gods. It is in line with Jesus's teaching in Mark 12:29. Bambang Noorsena quoted the original language of the text: *Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad* means '*Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one*'. Therefore, Christianity and Islam have something in common, which is to believe in one God and to believe that God does not have offspring.

Another verse discussed by Bambang Noorsena is Al-Maidah 73:

"Those who say, 'Allah is one in a Trinity', have certainly fallen into disbelief. There is only One God. If they do not stop saying this, those who disbelieve among them will be afflicted with a painful punishment"[12]. (Surah Al-Maidah 73, Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran)

Bambang Noorsena found that, based on the history of Quran exegesis by a Muslim scholar, the Quran does not oppose the Christian Trinity, since this trinity is very different from the Christian trinity. The oldest Quran exegesis was written by Muqotil bin Sulaeman, in the year of 776 AD. Narrated by Bambang Noorsena, Trinity in the Quran was perceived by Muqotil bin Sulaeman as Tritheism, because in his exegesis for Surah Al-Maidah 73, Mary was considered as one of the three gods. The trinity in Muqotil bin Sulaeman's exegesis consists of Allah, Isa and Mary. If we look at the history of Christianity in Mecca, according to Bambang Noorsena, some Christian heretics were found in Mecca and the surrounding area, including those who believed that Mary was one of the Trinity. More-

11 https://quran.com/4/171.
12 https://quran.com/5/73.

over, Bambang Noorsena explained that approximately 400 years before Islam was established, Saint Epiphanius from Salamis had reminded the people of the cult of Mary. Christian heretics, who followed the cult of Mary, were called Kollyridians[13]. In addition, Muqotil bin Sulaeman, as quoted by Bambang Noorsena, also explained Surah An-Nisa 171 as tritheism. In his exegesis, he wrote an explanation of the trinity in the verse as three separate gods. It means that the Trinity in the verses does not refer to Christianity, since Christians do not believe in three gods but, instead, addresses the Christian heretics, the Kollyridians, who were present in Mecca at the time the Quran was revealed.

Agreeing with Bambang Noorsena, Henning Wrogemann (2011) stated that sacred texts should generally be understood in the context of their time. He further argued that some isolated texts could easily be misused and, thereby, stir up conflict. Instead of isolating certain texts and basing the findings on the selected quotes alone, Wrogemann suggested engaging in a wider reflection on the interpretation of sacred texts. Another Muslim scholar is the Sunni scholar, Abdullahi an-Naim, who argued that we should concentrate on the universal character of the Quran. An-Naim, as quoted by Wrogemann, argued that the restrictive passages in Quran are no longer needed and the current obligation is to follow the universal goals of the Quran: justice, peace and equal rights for all people.

Another Muslim scholar was Farid Esack, who supports the universal value of humanity. Sunni scholar, Farid Esack, as quoted by Henning Wrogemann (2011), argued that, to overcome prejudices, a proper understanding of different terms used in the Quran is required. One of the terms that can be misunderstood is the word *kufr* or *kafir.* As we know, intolerant people usually regard others who are different from their religion as *kafir.* It increases hatred and prejudice against Christians, since extremists view them as people, who do not believe in God. To address this issue, Farid Esack, as quoted by Henning Wrogemann, suggested a more humanist translation for the word *kufr* or *kafir.* Instead of translating *kufr* as *unbeliever*, Farid Esack suggested that a more appropriate translation for the Arabic term *kufr* is *being ungrateful* to God.

The theological view that being ungrateful is not good is in line with Christian teaching. Christianity agrees that being ungrateful to God is not biblical. It is in line with what is written in the Bible. Giving thanks to God is an order, since it is the will of God. There are some Bible verses that emphasise an order to be grateful or thankful. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV) states, '***Give thanks*** *in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*'. Furthermore, Colos-

13 Shoemaker, Steven J.: Epiphanius of Salamis, the Kollyridians, and the Early Dormition Narratives: The Cult of the Virgin in the Fourth Century, in: Journal of Early Christian Studies 16/3 (2008), p. 371–401.

sians 3:15 (ESV) says '*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.* ***And be thankful.***' The attitude of being grateful is very important from a Christian theological perspective. In Psalm 95:2 (KJV), it is written '*Let us come before his presence with* ***thanksgiving****, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*' It teaches us to come before God's presence with a grateful heart. It means that the attitude of being grateful pleases God. On the other hand, being ungrateful does not please God. Furthermore, 2 Timothy 3:1–5 (ESV) refers to being ungrateful as a characteristic we should avoid:

> "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful,** unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people."

It can be concluded that both religions have the same thing in common. Both have a theological view that is against being ungrateful, and they do not contradict each other.

5. Social media influencers and the role of being the salt of the earth

In this global era, we can see what is happening throughout the world with one, single click. Globalisation, followed by the advanced use of technology, promotes a very quick way to get along with each other. Similarly, the government's response to some cases of intolerance in Indonesia is also influenced by social media. Once an influencer raises the topic and millions of *netizens* add their own comments, the case becomes viral on social media and attracts people's attention. When a case has been a trending topic on any online platform, more and more social media will pick up on the case, including TV reporters, newspaper journalists, etc. For example, the case of a Christian student forced to wear a hijab in a state school in Indonesia. When a social media influencer initially broke the news, it became viral with just one single click and the Minister of Education had to promptly express his concern about the sensitive matter. According to Permadi Arya in his Instagram post, it happened in other cases, such as the case of a church in Tanjung Balai Karimun, or the persecution of Christians in Cikarang and the case of Habib Rizieq. When something becomes viral, more netizens pay attention to it and drives others to immediately express their concerns

about the problem. The pressure of social media can be a strong force to turn around reality. Social media plays a vital role in influencing people's mindset.

We can also see how people fight against radicalism through social media. *Netizens* see how the opinion of Ade Armando, a lecturer from the University of Indonesia, who fights against radicalism through social media, has been influential for many people. Ade Armando, who educates people to be wise and use logical thinking when faced with intolerant religious leaders, is not the only one: there is also Eko Kunthadi and Denny Siregar. They play a very important role in deradicalisation through the Cokro TV Youtube Channel. People using social media to influence others have to be aware of intolerant attitudes and promote universal and human values. More and more people are following Cokro TV and more people are becoming more tolerant and value religious freedom. And then, there is also Permadi Arya, who is famous with for his slogan: *Fight Terror with Humour.* He is involved in defending the rights of the minority through social media, in which his creativity has led many people to fight against exclusion, discrimination and violence based on religion. Almost all of his social media posts are viral and have successfully encouraged people to change their mindset.

Another social media influencer who fights against radicalism is Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, the Director of the Nusantara Institute. A lecturer at the King Fahd University in Saudi Arabia, he successfully leads people to deradicalisation through his Facebook account. He writes more about Arabian culture, where he is currently living, and is proud to post pictures showing how tolerant people are in some parts of the Middle East. One day, he posted a photo showing some women wearing the hijab, who were making Christmas decorations. It enlightens Indonesian people not to have negative attitudes towards other religions. One other expert using social media is Bambang Noorsena, who uses it to enlighten people. Fluent in Arabic, he makes people interested in his lectures, which are available for all through his own YouTube Channel. His outstanding mastery of the history of religions raises people's awareness of the false teaching that misleads people and makes them become intolerant.

These most influential influencers are not only Christian, but Muslim, too. Despite darkness enveloping those who are narrow-minded, they are brought to the light. They are our current role models as *the salt of the earth* and, in our current situation, are enlightening others to fight against the exclusion, discrimination and violence that is used by one religion against another. They understand that the current radicalism must be tackled using contemporary methods, taking advantage of current technology. The development of the internet and IT has initiated a new way of combating radicalism: online social media. Addressing

current needs, the role of the social media influencer has a key role to play in promoting deradicalisation.

6. Recommendations to the Church and the UEM

With regard to the key role of the social media influencer, nowadays, I think it would be better if more and more people were involved. It is, therefore, necessary to encourage the young people of the future to use social media wisely to become *the salt of the earth*. For Christians, being *the salt of the earth* is mandatory. And, in line with our current context in the age of globalisation, influencing others through social media is the most effective way of promoting deradicalisation, and is, thus, part of being *the salt of the earth*. The UEM has been working diligently to hold interfaith dialogue to promote harmony, regardless of religious differences. It has also encouraged people to combat all forms of exclusion, discrimination and violence. Thus, it is also a task of all UEM Youth to continue this work to keep the nations from intolerant thoughts. I think it is not only important for the specific Indonesian or Asian context but also for all UEM Member Churches to be aware of religious-based exclusion, discrimination and violence and to promote universal values of humanity through social media.

From my own experience, since March 2020, I have been learning about becoming a social media influencer through my own YouTube channel, *A Moment with God Ministries*. I have a programme entitled *Words of Wisdom* that is open for all people and promotes words of encouragement for all people, regardless of their religion. I think it is a good way to promote the universal values of humanity. More and more Muslim friends watch my YouTube Channel, leaving positive comments, and they have started to view Christians differently, not as a *kufr* or *kafir*, but as fellow humans, who believe in God. Being an influencer with creative content helps others avoid prejudice against different religions. Therefore, I think being a social media influencer is the best way to fight against exclusion, discrimination and violence, while promoting humanity in the spirit of togetherness with people from various religious backgrounds.

To do this, the young people must be aware of some sensitive issues, including how intolerant people view the Christian faith and how to counteract it. It will help them play an important role to counteract any misleading issues regarding Christianity. They can then convey their own message through what they enjoy doing. For example, if one's hobby is writing songs, then he/she can write a catchy song, which contains their message. Using entertainment is a good way to transform people's mindset. One good idea would be to publish the song on a

social media platform. This is only one example. Imagine the outcome, when we have many young people with different talents, all playing an important role in social media. Therefore, my first recommendation is for the Church to equip young people with a proper understanding of how to defend their faith and to clarify misunderstanding issues promoted by intolerant people. For example, the issue of the Trinity, or of God having a biological child or of the meaning of the word *kufr* or *kafir.* The lectures delivered by Bambang Noorsena on his YouTube Channel are just one way of equipping young people with appropriate basic knowledge on how to defend their faith. Young people can watch his lectures and acquire the valuable knowledge they need.

The second recommendation is for the UEM and UEM Member Churches to encourage their youth to act as social media influencers to promote universal values including harmony between religions or, at least, to help their fellow youth to start up as social media influencers. Starting as a social media influencer is not easy, particularly when people are not yet well-known. Influencers need support from people around them. One simple act can provide the support these young people require to play an active role in being *the salt of the earth*, for example by subscribing to their YouTube, promoting the channels in UEM Member Churches or sharing their YouTube, Instagram, Facebook or other social media posts that produce a positive impact on influencing young people to live a better life. Therefore, young people will be encouraged to be *the salt of the earth* in a fun and creative way. Everyone can be a social media influencer. Being an influencer who promotes peace is a very good way to meet the current demand for 'digital marketing' to promote peace and harmony between different religions and faiths. Therefore, the Church and young people can be agents of change by applying their advanced digital marketing skills through social media platforms. What is meant by digital marketing here is using social media platforms to promote peace and harmony, fighting against exclusion and discrimination and building humanity in the spirit of togetherness.

7. Concrete recommendations

1. Include digital marketing (through Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, etc) as one of the strategies to be implemented through the Church's Desk of Public Relation and Partnership to promote peace and harmony between different religions and faiths and overcome intolerant teaching through deradicalisation.

2. Work together with interfaith communities to promote the social media accounts used for the digital marketing of deradicalisation.
3. Work together with interfaith communities to build unity, develop a shared perspective on radicalism and overcome intolerant teaching.
4. Support social media influencers fighting against radicalism.
5. Provide appropriate digital marketing training for church workers.
6. Provide appropriate digital marketing training for youth.
7. Provide appropriate digital marketing training for people or communities from different religions and faiths (interfaith community) to work together to fight against intolerant teaching.

Therefore, the Church, including church workers and youth, will be *the salt of the earth* through their use of advanced digital marketing skills to promote peace and harmony and acting as social media influencers fighting against exclusion and discrimination and building humanity in the spirit of togetherness with people from various religious backgrounds.

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List of Contributors, Jurors and Editors

Norita Novalina Sembiring
Prize 1

Norita Novalina Sembiring was a UEM Scholarship holder and holds Ph.D in STT Jakarta, she is Deputy secretary for GBKP Pastors Conference and General secretary for Foundation Board in GBKP College STMIK Kristen Neumann, Indonesia.

Georges Nkuwa Milosi
Prize 2

Georges Nkuwa Milosi holds a degree in Public International Law and is a district military prosecutor in DR CONGO. He is pursuing a PhD in international law and treaty at Euclid University.

Katarina Lange
Prize 3

Katarina Lange is a single mother of three children and an office administrator and master of home economics by profession. She completed her basic studies in Protestant theology in Reutlingen and is now studying for a Master's degree at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal

Rut Debora Butarbutar

Rev Rut Debora Butarbutar was a South-North volunteer in Germany and works as a pastor in Huria Kristen Indonesia (HKI). Rut is a student at Jakarta Theological Seminary and was 2022 participant in the International Study Program in Wuppertal/Germany.

Abel Dufitumukiza

Abel Dufitumukiza was a Rwandan scholar, who pursued a PhD in education at the University of Nairobi/Kenya on a UEM scholarship. Abel worked at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS). He was appointed as an intern in pastoral ministry at Gitantu parish, Kigeme Diocese, Rwanda. Abel was passionate about church mission, education and research surveys. He passed away in July 2021 due to a Covid-19 infection.

Bjarte Hetlebakke

Rev Bjarte Hetlebakke works at the Church of Norway and is a PhD Research Fellow at the Centre of Mission and Global Studies at VID

Spezialized University, Stavanger. His fields of studies are Systematic and Pastoral Theology.

Amos Kameli

Amos Kameli is a lawyer/legal Officer and works for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, in the North Western Diocese. He is the project Co-coordinator for Youth and Children Development Center and the Legal Officer at the Human Rights Desk of the ELCT/NWD.

Christian Kambale Kasomo

Christian Kambale Kasomo is member of CBCA in Goma and was a UEM South-North volunteer in Germany. He is the Founding President of Purpose-Driven Youth, a non-profit organization with focus on positive transformation and the empowerment of young emerging leaders. Christian is a student of theology at Africa International University in Nairobi, Kenya with UEM scholarship

Jonathan Kivatsi Kavusa

Dr Kavusa is a Research Fellow at Humboldt University in Berlin (Germany) and defines himself as a Christian scholar with a strong passion for Eco-Justice, Sustainability and Eco-theological hermeneutics in African context.

Maria Niester Insoraki Komboy

Maria Komboy is from West Papua and holds a master degree from Duta Wacana University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Her focus is on Old Testament studies, contextual hermeneutics, human rights and peace studies.

Marthe Maleke Kondemo

Dr Marthe Maleke Kondemo is a pastor of the Association of the Evangelical Church along the Congo River (CADELU). She has a doctoral degree in Old Testament with a focus on gender reading of the Hebrew bible with UEM scholarship. She is a postdoctoral research fellow at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and an associate professor from ISP Mbandaka.

Joel Mbongi Kuvuna

Prof Dr Joel Kuvuna Mbongi is from DR Congo and did his Master and PhD in Theology and Development in South Africa at University of Kwa Zulu Natal with UEM scholarship. His focus of study is in contextual theology and the prophetic role of the church in socio-political matters. As ordained Protestant pastor he is in charge of some university chaplaincies and initiated Kairos DR Congo.

David Lase

David Lase, pastor of BNKP, completed a master's degree in theology at STFT Jakarta from 2015 to 2017 on a scholarship from the UEM. His topic was "Forgiveness that liberates: Exegetical Study of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–31) and its Relevance for BNKP". He studied as a doctoral student at STFT Jakarta since 2020. Shortly before completing his PhD, he passed away after a prolonged illness.

Novel Matindas

Novel H. Matindas completed his theological education at Jakarta Theological Seminary and Protestantse Theologische Universiteit in the Netherlands. He was appointed as the Head of Bureau for Papua at Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) as representative of Evangelical Christian Church in Tanah Papua (GKI in Tanah Papua). He received UEM scholarship to pursue study in the field of Reconciliation and Peacebuilding at the University of Winchester, UK. He worked at Amnesty International office in Jakarta. Novel Matindas has passed away on 27th March 2022.

Akris Mujiyono

Rev Akris Mujiyono is a pastor and Lecturer from Salatiga, Indonesia. He is minister at Evangelical Church in Central North Java (GKJTU), Indonesia. He pursues currently his Ph.D in theology with UEM scholarship at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Indonesia.

Kavira Nganza

Kavira Nganza has a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Africa International University in Nairobi/ Kenya with UEM scholarship. She was Head of Women and Family Department in CBCA church. Since 2021 she is Counselor in the Psychological and Education Faculty at Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs and Trainer for trauma healing in CBCA Church.

Fiston Mumbere Ngesera

Rev Fiston Mumbere Ngesera received a Master of theology at Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs, Goma (DR Congo). The topic of the master thesis was: "The social dimension of worship according to Isaiah 58: A challenge for the Church of North Kivu/D.R.Congo." He is minister at CBCA Virunga Parish.

Francoise Niyonsaba

Rev Francoise Niyonsaba is a church minister at the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda and a Master's student of Theology in Community care

and Development at the Protestant Institute of Arts and social Sciences (PIASS) with UEM scholarship.

Sarah Elomese Oboh

Sarah Elomese Oboh is from Nigeria and recently completed her Master Studies at Ruhr University Bochum for Ethics: Economics, Law and Politics (EELP).

Jordan H. Pakpahan

Rev Dr Jordan H. Pakpahan is pastor from Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP). He was a holder of UEM Scholarship and got his Doctoral of Theology in Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW), Yogyakarta. He is a Lecturer at Sekolah Tinggi Teologia HKBP Pematangsiantar, Indonesia

Tiarma Siahaan

Tiarma Siahaan is a church worker in HKBP/Indonesia. She holds a Master of Theology degree in Missiology from Divinity School at Siliman University, Dumaguete, Philippines with UEM scholarship. She works as a Lecturer in Missiology at the College of Bibelvrouw Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (STB-HKBP) Laguboti.

Mikhael Sihotang

Mikhael Sihotang holds a Master of Arts degree in Intercultural Theology at the Georg-August-University of Göttingen. The master thesis is entitled: The Narrative of Mary and Maryam as an Alternative Solution for Intolerance in Indonesia. He is an expert in Islamic-Christian relations and contextual theology. He serves now as a candidate pastor at the head office of HKBP in Pearaja-Tarutung, Indonesia

Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu

Eklepinus Jefry Sopacuaperu is a New Testament Lecture at Theology Faculty of Indonesia Christian University in the Moluccas, Indonesia

Van Tibus

Van Tibus was a Research Assistant at the faculty of theology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa and completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Missiology from Stellenbosch University with UEM scholarship. He serves currently as a theological lecturer at Silliman Divinity School, Dumaguete, the Philippines.

Danar Sri Wijayanti

Danar Sri Wijayanti is a church member of the GKJTU and a former

UEM scholarship holder. She holds a Master of English Linguistics from the University of Indonesia and has been a teacher of English as a foreign language since 2007.

Sabine Hübner

Sabine Hübner is a theologian and works as assistant in the department for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in the United Evangelical Mission in Wuppertal/Germany.

Claudia Jahnel

Prof Dr Claudia Jahnel is Professor for Intercultural Theology and Body Theory at the Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, in the Protestant Theological Faculty.

Jochen Motte

Rev Dr Jochen Motte serves as executive secretary for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation and is a member of the board of the United Evangelical Mission in Wuppertal/Germany.

Jean-Gottfried Mutombo

Rev Dr Jean-Gottfried Mutombo from DR Congo is a regional pastor in the Office for Mission, Ecumenism and Church World Responsibility (MÖWe) of the Evangelical Church of Westphalia.

Andar Parlindungan

Rev. Dr Andar Parlindungan is originally from Indonesia and is an ordained minister of the Christian Protestant Toba Batak Church (HKBP). He serves as executive secretary for Training and Empowerment and is a member of the board of the United Evangelical Mission in Wuppertal, Germany.

Dennis Solon

Dr Dennis Solon from the Philippines is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and visiting professor at the Institute for Diaconic Science and Diaconic Management (IDM) in Bielefeld, Germany.

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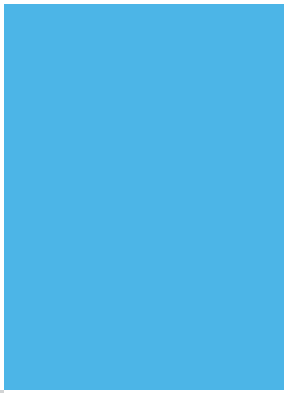

In light of the United Evangelical Mission General Assembly 2022 and the biblical theme "Being Salt of the Earth", the UEM invited young people from the UEM constituency to contribute essays to the study day on the theme of the Assembly and to reflect on the current challenges for churches to respond to discrimination, violence and extremism and to build inclusive communities.

The rich fruits of this essay competition are presented in this publication. The authors have reflected on various thematic issues that they believe should be addressed through mission work of the churches.

The following areas of concern may be mentioned: religious discrimination, plurality, diversity and inclusiveness; discrimination and violence against indigenous people; reconciliation, poverty, mission response to people addicted to drugs, ecological violence, marginalization of people affected by natural disasters, sexual violence, violation of children rights, racism, single parents, gender justice, violence in the context of war and violent conflicts.

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