

The school of Theology and Mission

Faith-based reconciliation:
How did Springs of Life Lutheran Church in Kibera, contribute to the process of
reconciliation after the post election violence of 2007-2008?
A study of interethnic and faith-based reconciliation in the slums of Nairobi

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List of abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIPEV	The Commission of Inquiry on Post Election Violence
ELCK	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KNCHR	Kenyan National Commission of Human Rights
KPU	Kenya People's Union
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NCCK	National Council of Churches Kenya
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SOL	Springs of Life Lutheran Church
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Table of content

List of abbreviations.....	2
1. INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND METHOD	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 Objective	6
1.3 Outline of the Thesis	7
1.4 The Field Study	8
1.5 Method	9
1.5.1 Qualitative Method.....	9
1.5.2 Limitations of the Field Study.....	14
1.5.3 My role – My Influence	15
1.6 The Context of my Research.....	17
1.6.1 Post Election Violence 2007-2008.....	17
1.6.2 Tribalism in Kenya.....	19
1.6.3 Christianity and politics in Kenya.....	22
1.6.4 Kibera.....	25
1.6.5 Springs of Life Lutheran Church	27
2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RECONCILIATION.....	29
2.1 What is Reconciliation?	29
2.1.1 What Makes Reconciliation Distinct from other Aspects of Peace Building?.....	30
2.2 Identity Conflict – the Setting of Reconciliation	32
2.3 The Theory of Reconciliation as a Peace Building Process.....	34
2.4 Religion and Conflict	36
2.4.1 The Assets of the Christian Church in Building Peace	37
2.5 Faith-based Reconciliation.....	40

3.	THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS WITHIN SOL.....	44
3.1	How Were SOL and Its Members Affected by the Post Election Violence?.....	44
3.2	What Kind of Initiatives Did SOL Take, and What Kind of Characteristics Did SOL Have, That Promoted Reconciliation Among Its Members and Its Neighborhood?	48
3.3	What Sort of Reconciling Effect Did These Initiatives and Characteristics of SOL Have on Its Members and Community?	53
3.4	What Are the Weaknesses and Limitations of the Reconciliation Within and Around SOL?.....	60
4.	LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS IN SOL.....	64
4.1	Analyzing and Categorizing of my Findings	64
4.2	In the Light of the Theories.....	66
4.2.1	Theories of Reconciliation and SOL.....	67
4.2.2	Theories of the Assets of the Church and the Situation in SOL	70
4.2.3	The theories of faith-based reconciliation and SOL.....	72
4.3	How to Use the New Knowledge of this Thesis?.....	74
4.3.1	Secular Practitioners of Reconciliation.....	74
4.3.2	Religious Practitioners/Faith Communities of Reconciliation.....	76
4.4	Conclusion.....	77
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	80
	Books, articles and speeches	80
	Other Internet sources	82

1. INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND METHOD

1.1 Introduction

On the night of the 30th of December 2007 Kenya exploded in the turmoil of ethnic clashes – the post election violence. On one side were the Kikuyus, the tribe of incumbent president Kibaki and also the biggest and most dominant tribe in the country. The other side of the conflict line was dominated by the tribes of Luo and Kalenjin. During the following two months 1,200 people were killed and more than 260,000 people were chased from their homes. According to a report issued by UNHCHR thousands of houses, shops and churches were burned and looted.¹

One of the hotspots of the conflict was Kibera, the largest slum in Sub-Saharan Africa. More than 1 million people live here in the outmost despair, poverty and lack of basic services. Crime, violence and organized criminal gangs are all parts of the daily life in the slum.

Kibera is a Kenya in miniature when it comes to ethnic groups. Here you can find all of the 42 tribes of the country represented and squeezed together in an area of four sq km.

In the midst of this slum is Springs of Life Lutheran Church. This is a small church, with around two hundred members. During the post election violence the church was looted and burned, members were chased from their homes and robbed, they suffered from lack of food, water, shelter and safety.

SOL is numerically dominated by people from the tribes of Luo and Kisi, but it has members from many other ethnic groups, also Kikuyus. Most of the church members of the Kikuyu tribe were chased away and lost their homes during this period of tribal conflict. As far as I know, none of the church members from the other tribes took active part in the violence of

¹ United Nations High Commissioner For Human Rights, “Report from OHCHR Fact-finding Mission to Kenya 6-28 Februar 2008”, page8; Available from <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/OHCHR%20Kenya%20Report.pdf>; internet; accessed 15 Februar 2010

that time.² Instead they also became victims as the violence and looting spread and common criminals took advantages of the turbulent times and joined in the plundering and robbing. During the post election violence the lines of supply and income were cut off and this also led to increased suffering among the inhabitants of Kibera. Even though most of my interview objects, all members of the church, did not take part in the actual violence, I did find traces of tribalism among them.

In the end of February 2008 a peace agreement was signed by President Kibaki and the opposition leader Raila Odinga from the Luo tribe. The violence ceased and slowly things came back to normal again. The wounds and affects of the post election violence were however strong and deep. It was time for a national effort to heal the wounds, rebuild broken relationships and fight the increased tribalism. It was time for reconciliation.

Reconciliation, as a peace building tool, aims at mending broken relationships and at the same time build new and lasting relationships between individuals and groups from opposite sides of the conflicting line. The hope and goal of this process is that new and strengthened relations between former enemies can be a part of the foundation for a sustainable peace, healing of the past and building of a common future.

1.2 Objective

A national and strategic process for sustainable peace and reconciliation was started and a multitude of initiatives has since been carried out to rebuild the unity in the country. In this thesis I will focus on the reconciliation process and initiatives that have been carried out within and by SOL.

The objective of this thesis is to find out in which ways Spring of Life Lutheran Church has had a reconciling affect on its grassroots members and neighborhood.

To find the answer to this main question, I have divided my objective into three sub-objectives:

- How was SOL and its members affected by the post election violence?
- Which reconciliation initiatives and characteristics can be found in SOL?

² One of my informants, who now is a church member, did take part in the violence. At that time he was however not a part of SOL.

- What sort of affect have these initiatives and characteristics had on the members of SOL and the local community of the church?

The reconciling effect that these initiatives can have on the members of SOL can be multiple. To make sure that I do not ignore any of them, I decided to look for the effects in three different levels:

- Cognitive; how did the reconciliation process fight negative stereotypes³ and rebuild new mental concepts of other tribes?
- Emotional; how did the process heal emotional hurts and transform hate and anger?
- Physical; how did the process help those who were physically effected by the post election violence, either by injury or by loss of property.

I did not choose SOL because it is a success story of faith-based reconciliation, but because it is a story of a church in need of reconciliation and healing. I wanted to find out how a “normal” church responds and affects its members and community in such a desperate time of need.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

My thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter is an introduction. The aim of this chapter is to give the reader good and necessary background information about the topic of the study, the method and the context.

The second chapter will give the reader theoretical perspectives about ethnic conflicts, reconciliation in general and faith-based reconciliation especially.

In the third chapter I will present my finding from the field study I conducted in Kibera. I will here present information about how the members were affected by the post election violence. I will also present my findings of what kind of reconciliation initiatives SOL carried out as a response to the post election violence. Characteristics of SOL that have had a reconciling

³ Definition of stereotype: “Judgments made on the basis of any group membership” (Jandt 2007, 77).

effect will also be presented. Lastly I will present information about how the members of the church and its local community were affected by the reconciling initiatives and characteristics of SOL.

In the forth chapter I will evaluate and analyze my findings. I will then look at my findings in the light of the theories presented in chapter two. Differences and equalities between my own findings and the theories will be presented and analyzed. Finally I will draw some conclusions about what worked well and what could have been done different in order for the reconciliation process in SOL to have a wider and deeper effect.

1.4 The Field Study

From the 20th of January to the 9th of March 2010 I stayed in Nairobi, Kenya where I conducted my field study on the Springs of Life Lutheran Church of Kibera.

I will here give a short background for why I chose to do my field study on this specific congregation. With only 8 weeks of field study, I had to focus on one specific congregation to make sure that I was able to penetrate deep enough into the emotions, attitudes and daily life of the grassroots people, to get a satisfying result.

In order to find *the right* congregation for my research I put down four criteria:

- It needed to be located within the Nairobi area, since I was supposed to live in a guesthouse (run by Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband) just outside of town.
- It needed to be a congregation that had been severely affected by the post election violence.
- It needed to be a congregation that had been affected by the national reconciliation project and also carried out local reconciliation initiatives.
- It needed to be a congregation that would be representative of many other congregations.

Using these criteria, the national leadership of ELCK and I, decided that the best case for my field study would be the Spring of Life Lutheran Church in Kibera, Nairobi.

The reason why I chose to carry out my research in, and write my thesis on, a faith community is that reconciliation originally is a religious concept. The message of loving your

neighbor, forgiving your trespasser, equality between all people and creating peace are all important foundations for reconciliation. The same concepts are also important in the teaching we find in the New Testament. Because of this I assumed that a Christian community, like the congregation in Kibera, would have the necessary precepts, understanding and focus on the process of reconciliation.

Another reason for my decision to study a Christian community is that religion, especially Christianity, plays an important role in the daily life of most Kenyans. Around 80 percent of the country's population belongs to a congregation and to a certain degree I would assume that they would be subject to the influence of the specific church they belong to. I would therefore also assume that life, teaching and processes of the churches in Kenya would play an important role in the national process of reconciliation.

From a Christian point of view I would also add that reconciliation and peace building is a task that the Christian communities should involve themselves in. Selecting a Christian community for my study also gives me the chance to see how this is done and whether it has any positive effect on the process of reconciliation.

1.5 Method

1.5.1 Qualitative Method

In my field study I used a qualitative method for the collection of data. As much as I could, I tried to be a participating observer in the daily life of the congregation in Kibera (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 47).

Qualitative method is all about describing the traits and characteristics of the phenomenon of research (Repstad 1998, 13). This is done through the use of methods and approaches that help the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the environment and the phenomena that he or she is studying. To be able to do this the researcher has to limit himself to the study of one or just a few environments. He also has to limit himself to a small number of informants and interview objects. Another important trait with qualitative method is that it requires a close and near relation between the researcher and the environment of research (Repstad 1998, 14).

The aim of research using qualitative method is not mainly to establish representative results that can be used as a base of generalization. The aim is rather to develop a deeper

understanding through describing details about traits of character that is found in the environment of research. This can then again be used to produce new hypotheses and concepts for further research (Repstad 1998, 20).

Qualitative methods often include a “hands-on” experience or a field study of the environment of research.⁴ This sort of research is important as it gives the researcher a “direct experience with the phenomenon”⁵ of the study. Through this the researcher will be able to look at the area of research and “the existing literature on the topic with a fresh perspective born of your [his]direct experience”.⁶

According to Knut Halvorsen, qualitative methods are well suited for research aimed at revealing information about social relations, purposes and objectives that can explain behaviors and traits. It is also an effective method for following and mapping processes that evolve over a period of time (Halvorsen 2008, 131-133). My objective for this thesis is to reveal information about one specific characteristic of the relationship between different ethnic groups in SOL – the reconciliation process. This is a complex process that needs time to mature and evolve. Because of these traits in my thesis I found the approach of the qualitative method both to be useful and possible for me to use.

Qualitative method contains a set of more specific methods, approaches and tools. For my thesis I found interviews to be the best and most efficient method. With only around eight weeks of field study, interviews gave me the chance to collect a sufficient amount of data for my thesis. The method of interviewing gave me the chance to acquire knowledge and understanding of the behaviors, motives and characters of my informants during the short time I spent in SOL(Halvorsen 2008, 138). I also tried to use the method of field observation. I used this method in an exploratory way as a means to get a broad understanding of the environment and processes of SOL (Halvorsen 2008, 135). This way observation was used as a complementing method to my main method of interviewing.

I did not live in Kibera, but I did observe and take part in the weekly services in SOL. I was also an active observer and participant in the socializing that took place outside the church

⁴ Qualitative methods does however also include text analysis and document analysis (Repstad 1998, 14)

⁵ Trochim, William M, “The Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2nd Edition”; available from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qual.php>; Internet; accessed 22 November 2010

⁶ Trochim, William M, “The Research Methods”

after the service. I visited some of the members in their homes and at their shops, and I tried to hang around the church office some days during the week.

As already stated, the main method of this thesis was interviews. The most important interviews were the ones I did with the grassroots members of the congregation. These are the people that could tell me and show me whether there is a true and practical reconciliation within the church or if tribalism and ethnic hate still exists. I interviewed eight grassroots members.

My criteria for the selection of these were as follows:

- They should be members of the church.
- They should in some way be affected by the post election violence.
- The informants should be from both sides of the conflict
- I wanted to interview the same number of males and females.
- I wanted to interview mostly young people, but also one of two older and more mature.
- I wanted my interview objects to be a representative selection of the members of the congregation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 163).

My field research was carried out in a very small and definite group – Spring of Life Lutheran Church of Kibera. The total number of members in the congregation is about 200. Because of this I will be very restrictive about describing age, tribe, gender, vocation or other information that can make it easy to identify my informants.

This is however a challenge especially when it comes to ethnicity. For parts of my study it will be important to identify which side of the conflict the respondents belong to. Since the number of Kikuyus, which makes up one side of the conflict, is very low in SOL, it would be very easy to identify these respondents if I am not extremely careful in protecting their anonymity.

So to protect the identity of my interview objects I will not go into any more detail about their identity. I can only say that I was able to follow my criteria for the selection. To keep their anonymity in this thesis I will only refer to these informants by numbers (from 1 to 8).

During the interviews I used well prepared interview guides, specifically prepared for each of the interviews. These guides were not followed in a strict manner – starting with the first question and ending up with the last. Instead I used the guides as a check list to make sure that I covered all the areas that I had planned to cover. This way the interviews were structured, flexible, dynamic and interactive (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 177).

The interview guides were specifically fitted for each of my interview objects. As I prepared for each interview I tried to fit the wording, the number, the order and the topics to fit each of my informants (Repstad 1998, 15). I did however make sure that I always covered the main topics:

- Describe your life as it was before the post election violence
- How were you affected by the post election violence?
- How would you describe your own tribe and the “enemy” tribe?
- How were your emotions and attitudes about the “enemy” tribe changed during post election violence?
- How did SOL help you during and after the post election violence?
- Is tribalism a problem within SOL?
- Has SOL been able to create reconciliation and healing after the post election violence?

The interviews were recorded so that I did not have to write down all the answers during the interview. Instead I could focus on listening and making sure that I got the information that I wanted.

I tried to create an informal tone during the interview so that the interviewees would feel comfortable and part of a normal conversation. First of all I tried to do this by having a humble image and attitude towards my interview objects. I tried to learn greetings and short sentences in Swahili that I used during the interview (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 169). I also told them that I was there to learn from them and that I had deep respect and empathy for what they had gone through. Through this I hope that most of my interview objects felt comfortable and relaxed. Most of the interviews with the grassroots members of the church

were done either in their homes or from within the church compound (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 176).

After the interviews I tried to find time to reflect and write down my impression of the interviewee and the main information of the interview (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 207).

I did also interview three of the leaders of the local congregation of Kibera. One of them was reverent Meeker, an American married to a Kenyan. At the time of my field study he had lived and worked as a pastor in Kibera for two and a half year. I interviewed this pastor twice. In this thesis I will refer to him as *the pastor*.

The aim of these interviews were to see if there was a cohesion between the aims and vision of the pastor and the actual situation among the grassroots members, when it came to questions of reconciliation and tribalism.

The other local church leader I interviewed was an important member of the core of elders. In this thesis I will just refer to him as *the elder*. He was well-educated and worked as a treasurer at the head office of ELCK. He was well respected by the members, as far as I understood, and he was not a part of any of the main tribes that took part in the post election violence. This gave him a unique role as a mediator in the congregation. I conducted three interviews with this elder. As he was living close to the church he had seen a lot of the violence and plundering himself. In the interviews he gave a detailed picture of what had happened around the church during the post election violence. He could also give me details on the programs and activities that had taken place in the church in the following process of reconciliation and healing. *The elder* also functioned as a gate opener in the way that he helped me find the right people for my interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004, 92-96).

The third local church leader I interviewed was a deacon. She was the wife of the pastor and in charge of the social work of the congregation. The deacon was from the Luo tribe. I interviewed her once and the main aim of this interview was to get a good overview of the social work SOL had carried out during and after the post election violence. I will refer to her as *the deacon*.

The reason why I choose not to make them anonymous, but instead refer to them by their titles is first of all that these three individuals holds positions in SOL that make them public actors in the very environment of my study. Identifying them by their positions is therefore important for understanding the processes in SOL. Referring to them by their positions is also important when it comes to giving credibility to their answers.

1.5.2 Limitations of the Field Study

It is not easy to measure the result of the reconciliation process in SOL. One of the reasons for this is that SOL did not conduct any well formulated projects or programs of reconciliation. There is no description of the situation before the reconciliation process, there was no description of proposed tools or initiatives of reconciliation and there is no description of goals or hoped outcome of the reconciliation process. Because of this I needed to look in every corner of the church for activities, initiatives and processes that had the possibility of having a reconciling effect on the members.

The main reason why it was not easy to measure the result of the reconciliation process is that reconciliation processes do not always have a measurable result. Reconciliation is about rebuilding broken relationships. Relationships are dynamic and because of this it is hard to determine any fixed results in changes in these relationships. So what I have been looking for in my research is “traces of change” in relationships (Lederach 2008, 132).

I did not have a baseline for my research in SOL. I did not have the chance to interview church members before or during post election violence, and there are few documents that can tell me much about the degree of tribalism, hate, stereotyping or violence in SOL during this period. Since I lack this baseline – the interviews and documents – it will be hard to be conclusive about the degree of change that has taken place in the member’s attitudes and feelings since the post election violence.

The only source I have to compensate for this is my interviews with church members and leaders, where I asked them, in a retrospective way, to tell me about their emotions, attitudes and processes before and during the post election violence (Repstad 1998, 13). I am also in possession of reports that can tell me about the degree of tribalism, hate and stereotyping in Kenya in general during the time before and during the post election violence. From these interviews and reports I will try to construct a baseline that can be useful in order to describe the outcome of the reconciliation process in SOL.

The church and the local neighborhood of Kibera are not living in a vacuum. It is constantly affected and influenced by a number of political, economical and structural factors. Also the reconciliation process within SOL and its neighborhood is being influenced by a number of other local, national and international factors. Because of this it will be hard to be conclusive about the causal relationships between specific initiatives taken by the church and specific affects among the church members and the local community.

To be able to draw such causal conclusions I would need a comparative study that could tell me about the tribalism and reconciliation process outside the church, but within Kibera. Unfortunately I am not in possession of such a study, and neither did I have time to conduct one myself. Such a comparative study could have helped me to isolate the influence of the church when it comes to reconciliation, from influence that comes from other sources. This could have given me a better factual base from which I could have drawn more precise conclusions about the reconciling affect that SOL had among its members and within its local community.

I did however conduct three group interviews among citizens of Kibera that did not belong to SOL. From these interviews I did get a slight understanding and insight into the tribalism and the process of reconciliation that are manifested in Kibera but outside SOL. Information from these interviews are however just giving a taste of the situation outside of the church and cannot be used as a base of any conclusions.

Another limitation of this study is that I did not have time to follow the church for a long period of time. Two months of field-study is a rather short time when it comes to developing a good understanding of a complex and manifold process such as the reconciliation process in SOL. The short time of field-study limited my chance to get a deep understanding and thorough knowledge of the environment that I studied. It also limited my chance to look at the development of the process of reconciliation as it evolved over time (Repstad 1998, 14-15). This does not mean that my findings are irrelevant, but these limitations must be acknowledged as a part of the context of the answers and conclusions presented in this thesis.

1.5.3 My role – My Influence

I was open about my role as a researcher and about my objective for the research. During the first church service in SOL that I participated in, I was introduced and given the chance to inform the congregation about my objectives and the ways my research would be used.

As a researcher using qualitative method and having an open, participating role, I experienced the paradox of trying to be *near* and at the same time *keep a distance* (Halvorsen 2008, 135). By *near* I mean that I did meet the people I interviewed, I did participate in part of their lives, I did try to understand them and I did talk to them about my motives and objectives. By *keep a distance* I mean that I tried to influence the environment of my study as little as possible and

at the same time I tried to keep a distance in order to broaden my perspective and keep my objectivity.

Despite my efforts, I acknowledge that it is impossible to be a neutral researcher without influencing the environment of the research or the result of the study. The important thing is that I am aware of the footprints I make and that I take this into account when I evaluate my findings (Repstad 1998, 58). I will now present some reflections of the possible influence I had on the environment and results of my research.

My very presence and my mere interest in talking about reconciliation definitely influenced the people that I interviewed. I was told by more than once that just talking about these issues both raised their awareness about the importance of reconciliation and also promoted reconciliation by itself (Repstad 1998, 56). Also the fact that I am white, and in their eyes rich, may have influenced my interviewees, their answers and my findings (Halvorsen 2008, 138). Some of my interview objects contacted me themselves and volunteered to be interviewed. I suspect that one of the reasons for this is that they hoped their contact with me could help them out economically. This was obvious to me since at least three of them later asked me to help them. One took me to her shop; another asked if I could help finance an orphanage and the third one asked if I could help him start a business. I did however make sure that I selected the main portion of my interviewees according to my chosen criteria.

Another aspect of me that probably influenced the way I conducted my research and maybe also my interview objects, is that I have former experience with African cultures and societies. My previous experience with African cultures probably helped me relate to and understand my research objects (Drønen 2006, 141-142). It also helped me fit into the daily life and rhythm in and around SOL. This former experience with African culture could however also make me preoccupied and selective in my research. With less experience of African culture I might have been more open for new and fresh understandings of the cultural traits and processes I studied.

My religious believes, being a Christian, probably also influenced my findings. First of all it was one of the reasons why I became interested in this topic. Although I tried to be objective in my research, my religious believes could produce some sort of bias in my research. On the other hand, I believe that my Christian belief and identity gave me credibility and helped the members of the church trust me and open up to me. It also gave me valuable knowledge and experience in order to understand the cultural setting that I was working in (Drønen 2006, 146-147).

1.6 The Context of my Research

1.6.1 Post Election Violence 2007-2008

The term *post election violence* is used to describe the violence that followed the presidential election in Kenya in 2007. This wave of violence and turmoil hit Kenya severely on the night of the 30th of December 2007. This was the very that Mwai Kibaki was announced winner of the presidential election that was held four days earlier. (KNCHR 2008, 3). The post election violence lasted for about two months.

A number of reports have been written about this tragic period. They all operate with high, though slightly different, numbers of casualties, IDPs and other terrible effects of the violence. According to a report conducted and published by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 1,200 Kenyans were killed, 268,300 people were chased from their homes, 41,000 houses were burned and countless businesses were destroyed and looted during the post election violence.⁷

The post election violence was ethnic violence between supporters of the incumbent President Mwai Kibaki and supporters of his challenger Raila Odinga. Throughout the country the fighting sides consisted of various constellations of tribes and groups. In most of the incidents of violence and turmoil it is however safe to say that it was the Kikuyu tribe against the other tribes. In Kibera and in the West it was the Luo tribe that was the main opponent to the Kikuyus, while in Rift Valley it was the Kalenjin.

There are many causes that together resulted in the fighting of the post election violence. The triggering cause was the announcement of Mwai Kibaki as the winner of the election. Kibaki, his political friends and his whole tribe, the Kikuyus, were all accused of “stealing” the election. Evidence of electoral fraud and cheating was even at that time strong, and mixed with the ethnic tension that had been stirred up, it sparked the violence. This cannot alone

⁷ United Nations High Commissioner For Human Rights. “Report from OHCHR Fact-finding Mission”, page 8

explain the post election violence by itself. To understand the violence, we need to look at the history and at the root causes.

Ever since Kenya opened up for multiparty elections in 1992, ethnic violence has followed the electoral processes. According to a report issued by Kenya Thabiti Taskforce after the post election violence, the single most important cause for this violence is “ethnic-based competition for the presidency because of the perceived socioeconomic benefits expected to accrue to the president’s ethnic community”(Kenya Thabiti Taskforce 2008, 12).

Unfortunately, there is much truth to that belief in Kenya. All three of Kenya’s presidents since independence in 1963, Yomo Kenyatta (Kikuyu), Daniel Arap Moi (Kalenjin) and Mwai Kibaki (Kikuyu) are believed to have favored their own tribe when it comes to development, education, business and positions in the government. With such a perceived history the other tribes felt neglected and believed that it was their “time to eat” – to get the president and the accompanying favors and benefits.

The disappointment and frustration, especially among the Luo, when they felt that they had been robbed by the Kikuyus, of their right to get the next president, erupted into the chaos of the post election violence. According to many of the people I talked to in Kenya, this was not the first time a Kikuyu president had cheated his political and ethnic rivals. It is believed to have happened in 1968,⁸ 2002⁹ and 2005.¹⁰ All these historic events helped to form negative stereotypes and hate of the Kikuyus, among members of other tribes. At the same time members of the Kikuyu tribe had strong negative stereotypes, hate and anger towards people of other tribes. One of the stereotypes they had was that members of other tribes are lazy and less clever than themselves. They used this stereotype to explain why Kikuyus in general are better off economically, than people of other tribes.¹¹

An ethnic conflict should however never be described or understood solely as a conflict caused by ethnic tension. There will always be a multitude of circumstances and other causes that have an important influence on, and contributes to the rise of the conflict. As Cejka and

⁸ Jomo Kenyatta imprisoned Odinga Odinga, his former vice president, and forbid his political party KPU. <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/khistory.htm>

⁹ Mwai Kibaki did not appoint a prime minister as he promised before the election (CIPEV 2008, 29)

¹⁰ He tried to introduce a new constitution that would give the president more power – contradicting the memorandum of understanding that he signed before the election in 2002 (KNCHR 2008, 20)

¹¹ Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Kenya: It’s the Economy, Stupid (Not just ‘tribalism’)”; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76159>; Internet; accessed 21 September 2010.

Bamat points out in their book *Artisans of Peace*, an ethnic conflict must always be understood in a wide context. In the cases they present they especially highlight the influence of colonial history, socioeconomic- and geopolitical interests, unequal access to goods and benefits, international politics and globalization when it comes to contributing to the rise of ethnic conflicts (Ceijka and Bamat 2003,11). All of these factors should also be seen as contributors to the post election violence in Kenya. I will not have time to discuss this in more detail here, but I will return to some of this in later chapters.

1.6.2 Tribalism in Kenya

Tribalism is a term normally used to describe “a strong sense of identifying with and being loyal to one's tribe, group, etc.”¹² The tribal or ethnic origin often becomes the major factor in the formation of personal or group identity. This tribal identity is exclusive in the way that it sets clear boundaries for who is “inside” and who is “outside”. It defines “us versus them”.¹³

Tribalism is originally reserved for defining the above mentioned processes within tribal societies. The same kind of group identity, “us versus them”-mentality and favoring of own group, is also found in other types of societies. These processes and mentalities would then be named ethnocentrism.¹⁴

The use of the term tribalism is debated among professionals. As tribal peoples seems to “be no more or less afflicted with ‘tribalism’ than any other categorization of human society”, the use of the word has been characterized as discriminating. This is because it can create the association that tribal societies are more tribal than other societies.¹⁵ I have however chosen to use the term tribalism in my thesis as that is the word used by the society that is the object of my study.

According to the Kenyan, political activist, Koigi wa Wamwere, tribalism was created by the British colonial rule and their anthropologists (wa Wamwere 2003, 56). This might be an exaggeration, but his claims are partially supported by Paul Gifford who even argues that the ethnic groups in Kenya hardly could be characterized as tribes before colonialism.

¹² <http://www.yourdictionary.com/tribalism>; accessed 20 November 2010

¹³ <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Tribalism>; accessed 20 November 2010

¹⁴ <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Tribalism>; accessed 20 November 2010

¹⁵ <http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Tribalism>; accessed 20 November 2010

...none had unified government, none a unified line of patriarchal decent, almost none practiced only one mode of subsistence, no ethnic group had a standard language, there was no power larger than the small community, and no structure of competition that could encourage leaders to make of their group a force against other such groups (Gifford 2009, 6).

Gifford further argues that the colonial rule was a primary definer of geographical boundaries between the ethnic groups. This again led to more, and ethnically defined, competition over resources and power. “Through these processes, ethnic groups became political tribes” (Gifford 2009, 7).

The African independent news agency *News from Africa* which according to themselves publishes news and feature stories written from an African perspective, describes the colonial rule as “divide and rule”, in an article by Zachary Ochieng. By favoring, protecting and giving advantages to certain tribes and moving, exploiting and fighting other tribes the British enhanced the tribal identities, competition and ethnic hate. “Through divide and rule, the administration played off one ethnic group against another or signed protection treaties with some ethnic groups, thereby cementing the differences between the various groups.”¹⁶

When Kenya became an independent state in 1963, the Kikuyu politician Jomo Kenyatta became president. Through his rule he continued and enhanced tribalism in Kenyan politics as he favored his own tribe when it came to positions, politics and economy. “Under Kenyatta, a Kikuyu clique advanced itself spectacularly, especially taking over parts of the ‘White Highlands’ from which most settlers had been bought out” (Gifford 2009, 9).

The same mentality of tribalism was characteristic for Kenyatta’s successor Daniel Arap Moi. Moi being a Kalenjin exchanged most of the Kikuyus of high position that he inherited from Kenyatta, with people from his own tribe. Also he favored his own tribe and place of origin when it came to politics and economy (Gifford 2009, 9). Moi was however not just a part of tribalism, he used and manipulated the already existing mechanisms of tribal identity to orchestrate tribal conflicts and ethnic cleansing.

¹⁶ Ochieng, Zachary, “Kenya’s long road to independence”; available at http://www.newsfromafrica.org/newsfromafrica/articles/art_10816.html; Internet; accessed 25 November 2010.

KANU¹⁷ politicians incited followers, mostly using bows and arrows and other traditional weapons, to drive away Luo, Luhya and Kikuyu communities who would almost certainly vote for opposition parties...In the decade following the introduction of multipartyism, it is estimated that at least 2000 people were killed and 400.000 displaced in politically-motivated violence directed at ethnic groups perceived to support the opposition (Gifford 2009, 13).

Also incumbent president Kibaki has been accused, and rightly so, for promoting and using tribalism during his political rule. Furthermore Kibaki has failed to address historical landownership that has been one of the underlying causes of tribalism in Kenya (KNCHR 2008, 17).

Tribalism is still a strong force operating at all levels of the Kenyan society. The Waki report puts it this way:

... a feeling among certain ethnic groups of historical marginalization, arising from perceived inequities concerning the allocation of land and other national resources as well as access to public goods and services. This feeling has been tapped by politicians to articulate grievances about historical injustices which resonate with certain sections of the public. This has created an underlying climate of tension and hate, and the potential for violence, waiting to be ignited and to explode (CIPEV 2008, 23).

A survey that was carried out just before the presidential election in 2007 showed that most of the voters intended to vote for a candidate that in one way or another was supported by or affiliated to his or her own tribe. Voting according to tribal lines was especially evident among voters from the Luo and the Kikuyu tribes. While around 90 % of the Luo voters said that they intended to vote for Odinga (who is a Luo), 90% of the Kikuyu voters said that they were going to vote for Kibaki (who is a Kikuyu).¹⁸

The same survey did however show that ethnicity does not play the most dominant role in the perceived identity of Kenyans. To the vast majority of the interview objects of this survey, being a Kenyan is more important to their identity than what tribe they belonged to. Only

¹⁷ KANU was the political party of president Moi.

¹⁸ Dercon, Stefan, "Ethnicity, Violence and the 2007 Elections in Kenya", page 2; available from <http://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/members/stefan.dercon/Ethnicity.pdf>; Internet; accessed 24 November 2010.

around 10% of the informants said that their ethnicity is more important to their identity than their nationality.¹⁹

It seems thus that tribalism plays a bigger role when it comes to politics than it does in the daily life of Kenyans. In politics the tribal card is often played by the politicians. Through the manipulation of existing tribal feelings they try to create or secure matters to their own benefit and power (Cejak and Bamat 2003, 2). This has happened frequently in Kenya. Former president Moi is maybe the most renowned for orchestrating and manipulating ethnic conflicts and clashes (Gifford 2009, 10), but other political leaders in Kenya have done the same.

1.6.3 Christianity and politics in Kenya

Christianity is the biggest religion in Kenya. According to the CIAs *The World Factbook* 78% of all Kenyans are Christians. 45 % of them belong to Protestant churches and 33 % belong to Catholic churches.²⁰

The Christian community in Kenya is diverse and the different church affiliations range from Catholics, to Americanized charismatics and traditional African churches.

I do not plan to give a detailed description of the theology and practice of the churches in Kenya. To this thesis, the most important aspect of the churches is the involvement and linkage that has been between Kenyan churches and the political sphere of the country. This can give important understanding of why and how SOL, and other churches, decided to play, or not to play, a role in the process around the presidential election of 2007, the following violence and the ongoing reconciliation process.

According to professor John Lonsdal at Trinity College in Cambridge, the link has always been strong between the state and the churches in Kenya. The churches have seldom taken a clear stand against the government, but instead submitted to its authority.

And there is no doubt that the power of the state has again and again been seen by the churches as fundamentally beneficial, a bulwark itself against widely feared tendencies that Kenyans see in themselves towards social violence, generational and gendered tensions, and inter-communal conflict. Authority is to be preferred to anarchy. And

¹⁹ Dercon, Stefan, "Ethnicity, Violence", page 3.

²⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>; accessed 25 August 2010

successive governments have returned the compliment. The colonial govt welcomed missionary supervision of schooling as some insurance that African traditional disciplines, eroded by social change, would be replaced by religious restraints. The Kenyatta govt's Ominde commission on education, soon after independence, took much the same view. Daniel arap Moi was often seen in church; and Kibaki makes no secret of his Catholic Christianity.²¹

In this paper I will especially look at the role of the mission churches which is a term used to describe churches that were founded by western missionaries. ELCK can be regarded as a Mission church because it was founded by Swedish Lutheran missionaries in 1948 (Halake).²² The church has later had close ties to Scandinavian Lutheran mission organizations and churches.

Mission churches in Kenya have not played a dominant role on the political scene of the country. Their voice in challenging inequality and injustice has been rather weak. On the other hand the churches have always had strong social conscience and involvement in the society. "Much more than for their political involvement, Kenya's mainline churches are now distinguished for their 'service provision' (Gifford 2009, 46). Also the Catholic Church in Kenya is described by Gifford as a church that has its priorities elsewhere than in political advocacy. "It is development that the Catholic bishops are really involved in. In that area, their commitment is enormous" (Gifford 2009, 62).

There is however an exception to the church's lack of political involvement and advocacy. During the one-party rule of President Daniel Arap Moi some of the churches, and especially some individual clergy, steadily grew stronger in their criticism of the totalitarian rule of the president.

The churches have been highly respected institutions, and the only Moi could not bring under KANU control ... Church leaders, building on this general respect and their relative immunity and access to foreign funds as heads of institutions with international link, were particularly prominent in challenging abuses of the one-party state. However, the actors were individual churchmen rather than the churches themselves (Gifford 2009, 41).

²¹ Lonsdale, John, "Religion and Politics in Kenya", page 5; available from <http://www.ocms.ac.uk/docs/20040831-Lonsdale.pdf>; Internet; accessed 30 November 2010.

²² Interview made with the General Secretary of ELCK, John Halake, Nairobi, March 2nd 2010.

After the end of the one-party system in December 1991²³ the political advocacy and critical voice of many of the churches and church leaders silenced. With the advent of the new president Kibaki in 2002, the few remaining critical voices of the churches became even weaker.

It must be said that at the end of this campaign for the multi-party state the churches seem to have rather lost their way ... Certainly the NCCK under Musyimi changed its stance from “principled opposition” during the Moi administration to “principled cooperation” toward Kibaki’s” (Gifford 2009,43).

In addition to having a weak voice when it came to criticizing inequality and injustice, the churches themselves, including the clergy, were also bound and influenced by tribal loyalty. The different churches and church leaders would often take a stand in political issues based on their tribal background and place of origin. Based on the same reasons they would also determine which candidate they would support in political elections.

Kenya’s clergy, including the Catholic bishops, are not immune from Kenya’s tribal politics, according to which political loyalty is determined by place of origin or ethnicity and patrimonial-clientelist obligations” (Gifford 2009, 59)

Because the churches became a part of the system of tribalism that had plagued the society and politics of Kenya, they were also partially to blame for everything that went wrong during the presidential election of 2007 and the following violence. This failure of the churches was recognized by Kenyans and through this the churches lost credibility and to a certain degree also their position as peace makers and unifiers. This became very clear when the churches tried to take on this role in order to stop the post election violence.

As the post-election violence took hold, however , all advocated peace and reconciliation ... It soon became clear, however, that the churches no longer had the authority to perform any such function [as a mediator]. It was admitted in the media talk-backs, in newspapers, virtually without exception, that the churches had forfeited much credibility. The NCCK publicly apologized, admitting that the churches had

²³ Nyström, Christina. “Kenya: The Party System from 1963-2000”; available at <http://www.janda.org/ICPP/ICPP2000/Countries/9-CentralEastAfrica/96-Kenya/96-Kenya63-00.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 September 2010.

been compromised, having taken sides in the run-up to the election” (Gifford 2009, 44).

The history of the churches political involvement and advocacy I have presented here is of course a general picture that does not necessarily apply to every single church. It does however give a good overview over the role churches have played in the politics of Kenya and of the position churches find themselves in today when trying to play the role of a peace maker and reconciler.

1.6.4 Kibera

Kibera, with a probable population of more than one million, is located just outside of the downtown area of Nairobi. It is said to be the largest slum in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (Parsons 2009, 28).

Kibera is just one of many slums in Nairobi. In 1995 the slums in the city were said to house around 60% of the city’s inhabitants (Parsons 2009, 14). There is good reason to believe that this number is even higher today as the numbers of slum-dwellers are growing every year. According to an estimate made by UN HABITAT, the slums in the world are now growing by 27 million people annually (UN HABITAT 2006, iv).

In Kibera you can find most of the country’s 42 tribes represented. The majority of the inhabitants are Luo²⁴ but there are also big minorities of other west-Kenyan tribes like Kisi, Luhya, Kamba and Masai. The dominant tribe in Kenya, Kikuyu, is also well represented in Kibera. While most of the inhabitants of the other tribes are tenants, many of the Kikuyu inhabitants are landowners and a little better off. The same is true about the first settlers of Kibera – the Nubians²⁵ – now making up approximately 15 % of the population of the slum.

Even though you can find all of the tribes of Kenya represented in Kibera, the slum is also divided along tribal lines where different ethnic groups are dominant in their respective areas (CIPEV 2008, 198). The area where SOL is located, Gatwekera, is dominated by Luos.

Traditionally there are few Kikuyus here and many of those who did live here before the post

²⁴ Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Kenya: It’s the Economy, Stupid (Not just ‘tribalism’)”; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76159>; Internet; accessed 21 September 2010

²⁵ <http://www.kibera.org.uk/Facts.html>; accessed 21 August 2010

election violence, were chased out. So far few of them have come back. This is also the reason why the dominant tribe in SOL is Luo and that there are few Kikuyus represented in the church.

The social and economic conditions for the inhabitants of Kibera are tough. Adam W. Parsons describes the living conditions in Kibera this way: "... it is among the most iniquitous, distressing and heart-rending places on planet Earth; no infrastructure, no roads, no sewers, no toilets ... no running water, no maps, no rubbish collections, no jobs" (Parsons 2009, 28).

The life expectancy for the people of Kibera is also low, 37 years. In Kenya as a whole people can expect to live until they are 57 years.²⁶

Crime, violence and lawlessness are also part of the daily life in Kibera. This includes "extortion, murder, illegal taxation and rape" (CIPEV 2008, 193). Together with poor social conditions and the ethnic mix of the slum, this creates an atmosphere and an environment of tribalism, hopelessness and despair. This was rich soil for the rise of the post election violence and it strongly contributed to the violence that Kibera witnessed after the presidential election of 2007 (CIPEV 2008, 195).

During post election violence, Kibera suffered severely. Only during the first night of the violence, the 30th of December 2007, almost 50 people were killed according to a report (KNCHR 2008, 50). According to the official Waki report "the brunt of the suffering in Nairobi was borne by poor people living in low income neighborhoods [such as Kibera]" (CIPEV 2008, 203).

The very minute that Kibaki was announced the winner of the presidential election, the streets of Kibera exploded in fire, violence and turmoil. One of the members of SOL, described it this way:

Right after I heard the announcement I went out of my house and there were fire everywhere. Many of the shops in my area were owned by Kikuyus ... and all of those shops were on fire just one minute after the announcement. After that people started to come together and forming groups. More shops came on fire and they started looting and steeling (Informant 7).²⁷

²⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>; accessed 25 August 2010

²⁷ Interview made on the 4th of February 2010

In the following two months the violence came and went in waves. Shops and houses that belonged to people of the wrong tribe were burned and the people chased. This way Kibera saw a sort of ethnic cleansing during this time where the different ethnic enclaves were cleansed of people of the enemy tribe or tribes. Most of the ethnic cleansing in Kibera was done by chasing and not by killing. Unfortunately a number of people were also killed during this cleansing.

According to my interviewees most of the chasing, looting and burning in Gatwekera was done by youths from the Luo tribe. In this area the first people targeted were Kikuyus and some Kambas.²⁸

As the violence and turmoil continued criminal gangs and common criminals joined in and took advantage of the chaos and lawlessness. Many houses, buildings and shops belonging to people of other tribes were also burned and looted.

With the shops burned, and the normal chain of supply cut off, all the inhabitants of Kibera became victims and suffered (CIPEV 2009, 199). More descriptions will follow in the subsequent chapters.

1.6.5 Springs of Life Lutheran Church

SOL is a small Lutheran church situated in Gatwekera, Kibera. It congregates around 200 people, including children, for their Sunday services. Before the post election violence SOL had around 60-70 participants at their services (The pastor).²⁹ The church is lead by an American pastor, Dennis Meeker, who is married to a Kenyan of the Luo tribe.

The congregation is a multi ethnic church, but it is dominated by members of the Luo and Kisi tribes. As far as I was told there were only three Kikuyu families attending the services.

During the post election violence SOL and its members were heavily affected. The church compound was looted and the chapel, the school and the medical clinic were burned. Also the members of the church were affected by the violence.

²⁸ The reason why the Kambas were targeted, was that Kibaki appointed a Kamba, Mr Kalonzo Musyoka, as his vice president.

²⁹ Interview made with Pastor Dennis Meeker in Nairobi, February 2nd 2010.

SOL owns a big compound in Gatwekera. In addition to the church building itself the compound contains a school and a small medical clinic. The church also runs different social programs for needy people in the neighborhood (The deacon).³⁰

SOL is a part of the ELCK. This is a church affiliation started by Swedish missionaries in 1948. The affiliation was started in the west of Kenya in the Kisi and Luo dominated region of Nyanza (Halake). This is probably the reason why the church even today is dominated by these two tribes. There are few Kikuyus in ELCK as the church has little foothold in traditional Kikuyu regions of the country.

³⁰ Interview with the deacon of SOL conducted in Nairobi, February 2nd 2010.

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF RECONCILIATION

In this chapter I will look at the theories of reconciliation, identity conflict and faith-based reconciliation. My main sources of these theories are John Paul Lederach's book *Building Peace Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* and Brian Cox's book *Faith-Based Reconciliation. A Moral Vision That Transforms People and Societies*.

2.1 What is Reconciliation?

It is hard to find a good and simple definition of the concept of reconciliation. The reason for this is that it is used in so many different settings and discourses, and at the same time it covers a range of different psychological, social and physical initiatives and processes. Some standard and brief definitions are found at Dictionary.com. I will here mention four of them as they give a good picture of the multitude and complexity of the term reconciliation:

- to become friendly with (someone) after estrangement or to re-establish friendly relations between (two or more people)
- to settle (a quarrel or difference)
- to make (two apparently conflicting things) compatible or consistent with each other
- to reconsecrate (a desecrated church, etc)³¹

To understand the essence of reconciliation in the discourse of peace building, it is important to be a little more precise and specific. Brian Cox, an experienced practitioner of faith-based reconciliation, summed up his understanding of reconciliation this way:

³¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reconciliation>; accessed 22 September 2010

Reconciliation is a rich and complex concept that cannot be captured and expressed by any single definition. Rather, it is like the facets of a diamond that each reflects only a portion of the totality. However at the heart of faith-based reconciliation is restored relationships with God, self and others (Cox 2007, 26).

John Paul Lederach gives us another and even more precise perspective on reconciliation as he stresses the importance of building new relationships through the sharing of past grief and hate, and at the same time building a new interdependent future and new perceptions of each other.

Reconciliation must be proactive in seeking to create an encounter where people can focus on their relationship and share their perceptions, feelings and experiences with one another, with the goal of creating new perceptions and a new shared experience (Lederach 2008, 30).

John Paul Lederach is one of the most influential scholars when it comes to the theory and practice of peace building. In his books Lederach maps out a theoretical and practical framework for peacebuilding in societies that have been plagued by ethnic- and other identity conflicts. Lederach sees reconciliation as a concept that has to be complimented by other political, social and structural initiatives and processes, in order to create a sustainable peace. This way Lederach defines reconciliation into the broader concept of peace building.

Brian Cox, my other main source for the understanding of reconciliation, brings in the aspect of *faith-based* reconciliation. Cox gives a detailed description of how religion and faith can contribute to the process of reconciliation. He also outlines the religious values and tools that are important in this process. In this way Lederach and Cox complement each other in creating the theoretical framework that I will use in this thesis.

2.1.1 What Makes Reconciliation Distinct from other Aspects of Peace Building?

Often we hear *peace building* and *reconciliation* mentioned in the same breath and for many these two terms can be hard to distinguish between. In many ways they are inseparable, but at the same time they do carry different and complementary dimensions and aspects. Because of this I do feel a need to clarify the differences between these two terms, before I continue. This is how Lederach defines peacebuilding:

Peacebuilding is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationship ... metaphorically peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct (Lederach 2008, 20).

Traditional peace building has mostly been focused on diplomacy and conflict resolution. This means that the conflicting parts and the mediators, in trying to build peace, mostly have been paying attention to the disputes and arguments of the conflict instead of the rebuilding of relationships between antagonists. According to Brian Cox this approach has not been adequate in dealing with identity-based conflicts.³²

Lederach claims that the aim of reconciliation is to reframe the understanding of the conflict “so that the parties are no longer preoccupied with focusing on the issues in a direct, cognitive manner” (Lederach 2008, 35). Reconciliation, according to Lederach, is all about creating opportunities for “the affected population to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present” (Lederach 2008, 35).

As far as I have found there are at least three different ways to look at the interdependent relationship between peace building and reconciliation:

- Reconciliation is one separate component of the broader framework of peace
- Reconciliation is the ultimate goal of peace building
- Reconciliation is an inseparable part of every step of peace building

Peace building is a “complex and multifaceted endeavor” (Lederach 2007, 63) that consists of many sub-processes and initiatives. Examples of such processes and initiatives can be cease-fire, court cases, mediation, structural-, political- and social change. Restoring relations – reconciliation – can also be seen as one such separate process adding up to the broader picture of peace building.

Reconciliation can also be seen as “the ultimate goal of peacebuilding”.³³ The aim of peace builders is not merely to stop the fighting, but to help create an environment of trust where relationships between former antagonists can be restored and grow. This way the restored

³² Cox, Brian, “Faith-Based Reconciliation Outline of Notes”, page 1; available from http://www.icrd.org/storage/icrd/documents/cox_iiit_speech_notes.pdf; Internet; accessed 21 September 2010.

³³ <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/recocil.htm>; internet; accessed 25 September 2010.

relationships – the reconciliation – itself, becomes the goal of the other peace building initiatives and processes.

The broadest and probably most correct description of the relationship between peace building and reconciliation is that reconciliation is a part of every step in the comprehensive peace building process. It is “providing a focus and a locus appropriate to every stage of peacebuilding” (Lederach 2007, 151). This means that reconciliation is capable of adding a new dimension into the other components and initiatives of peace building. The restoration of relationship is an important foundation for the other peace building means. This way reconciliation runs like a red thread through the whole process of peace building.

Before I get into details about how reconciliation can add new dimensions to different parts of the peace building process, I need to look at the term *identity conflict* – the very reason for the need of the type of reconciliation that this thesis is all about.

2.2 Identity Conflict – the Setting of Reconciliation

An identity-conflict is a conflict rooted in the differences in the perceived or objective identity of the conflicting parts. The identity differences are often ethnic, religious or based on geographic/regional affiliation. The reasons why identity-marks, like religion and ethnicity, plays such an important role in today’s conflicts are many. In the widely debated article *The clash of civilizations?*³⁴ Samuel Huntington describes the identity differences as “a product of centuries” (Huntington 1993, 25), and claims that these differences are much more fundamental than other differences such as ideological and political. Deep,– or old, differences do not necessarily lead to conflict, but may open up for a vulnerable situation that can easily erupt into a violent conflict. In situations where groups of different identities in addition have a “long-term fear and direct experiences of violence that sustain an image of the enemy, people are extremely vulnerable and easily manipulated” (Lederach 2008, 15). These are the situations where identity differences often lead to an identity conflict.

It is also in the human nature to seek a closer identification with people that are like themselves when they experience hard times, violence and structural inequality. The groups

³⁴ *The clash of civilizations?* is widely debated among scholars of culture and ethnicity. I will not debate his article in my thesis, but I do think that some of his descriptions of clashes of civilizations are interesting and that they can also add understanding to the more politically correct term “identity conflict”.

we look for sanctuary in, in these situations “may be clan, ethnicity, religion, or geographic/regional affiliation or a mix of these” (Lederach 2008, 13). By doing this the already existing feeling of difference of identity between ethnic or religious groups are reinforced when violence erupts, and the coexistence between them run into a negative spiral. “The process by which this happens has its roots in longstanding distrust, fear and paranoia, which are reinforced by the immediate experience, in turn, further exacerbates the hatred and fear that are fueling the conflict” (Lederach 2008, 13).

Identity conflicts are seldom only caused by ethnic or religious differences. They are often coupled and amplified by other factors such as historic incidences, socioeconomic and geopolitical aspects and poverty and inequality. In the book *Artisans of Peace* Cejka and Bamat point out many of these factors and exemplifies them through case studies from conflicts around the world. One contributing factor that is common for most identity conflicts in non-western countries is the colonial history. “Our study points out the strong impact of colonialism in shaping many of these conflicts” (Cejka and Bamat 2004, 11). This is also a contributing factor in the post election violence in Kenya.

Another fundamental aspect of many identity conflicts is that they are often triggered or reinforced through manipulation by the government or other strong political powers. It is rare to see large violent conflicts erupting and escalating as a result of a local ethnic conflict alone. Instead they are often the result of political or military powers taking advantage and manipulating a latent conflict or unstable situation (Cejak and Bamat 2003, 2).

Underlying causes like poverty and historical injustice can in many situations be the root-causes of violent conflicts. But without the manipulation and mobilization of political leaders, often with selfish interests, these situations would never have erupted into violent conflicts (Lederach 2008, 13).

The manipulation can also happen through institutions and structures. Media, schools, social and religious institutions do play an important part in shaping the identity and world-view of individuals and groups. In societies on the brink of an identity conflict this shaping is often done in a negative way where “the other”, through stereotyping and selective information, is portrayed as the enemy (Cox 2007, 23).

2.3 The Theory of Reconciliation as a Peace Building Process

Now it is time for a closer look at what reconciliation is and how it can be implemented. As I have already mentioned Lederach sees reconciliation as a restoration of relationships between antagonists. “The framework must address and engage the relational aspects of reconciliation as the central component of peacebuilding” (Lederach 2008, 24).

One of the main characteristics of reconciliation is that it both deals with the past and the future. Reconciliation acknowledges “the need to recognize past grievances and explore future interdependence” (Lederach 2008, 34).

The partners of a reconciliation process have to deal with the past grief, losses, aggression, hate, stereotypes and all other mental and emotional aspects of the violent past. This goes both for the offenders and the victims of the violence. For the victims reconciliation is a place where they can share their experiences, perceptions and emotions about the violent past.

People need opportunity and space to express to and with one another the trauma of loss and their grief at that loss, and the anger that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices experienced ... Acknowledgment through hearing one another's stories validates experience and feelings and represents the first step toward restoration of the person and the relationship” (Lederach 2008, 26).

For the offenders reconciliation is a place where they can listen to the stories of the victims, repent and ask for forgiveness.³⁵ Through this mutual process of sharing, understanding, getting to know the innermost thoughts of each other, forgiving and letting go, a relationship can start to heal and be restored.

At the same time as reconciliation is dealing with the past, it also has to be committed to creating a common future. If the conflicting parts are only dedicated to dealing with the past, they can easily become stuck in it – its disagreements, violence and hate (Lederach 2008, 26). By involving the issue of a common future the reconciling partners add a new dimension to the process of reconciliation. This aspect is all about trying to build a common, better and interdependent future. An “opportunity must therefore be given for people to look forward

³⁵ In most conflicts we will find both victims and offenders on each side. This means that reconciliation is a place where both sides both share losses and grievances, and ask forgiveness for their trespasses against each other.

and envision their shared future” (Lederach 2008, 27). This has to be done both through creating initiatives for a common future, and through a cognitive and emotional process where the conflicting parts are changing their perception of each other from enemy to partner.

Traditional diplomacy and peace building has been dedicated to the politics of solving disputes and issues (Cox 2007, 25). In doing this they have been dealing with establishing objective facts, negotiations and compromises. Reconciliation brings in the dimension of also dealing with the subjective perceptions that the conflicting parts hold of the conflict, each other and themselves. Lederach stresses the importance of dealing with this on a mental and an emotional level. “...peacemaking must be rooted in and responsive to the experiential and subjective realities shaping people’s perspective and needs” (Lederach 2008, 24).

This aspect of reconciliation forces the conflicting parts and the mediators to deal with both the negative stereotyping and the negative emotions that each part of the conflict holds of “the other”. Contemporary conflict thus demands innovation, the development of ideas and practices that go beyond the negotiation of political interests and issues, and instead “pushes us to probe into the realm of the subjective – generationally accumulated perceptions and deep-rooted hatred and fear” (Lederach 2008, 25).

If not dealt with these objective perceptions and negative emotions can become fertile soil for new violent conflicts. Encounters that are a part of a reconciliation process create an opportunity for the conflicting parts to “share their perceptions, feelings, and experiences with one another, with the goal of creating new perceptions and a new shared experience” (Lederach 2008, 30).

As a Christian, Lederach also finds values and descriptions of reconciliation in the Bible. His main verse is Psalm 85:10: “Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed.” Only by paying attention to all four of them reconciliation gets a well balanced foundation and essence.

By truth Lederach underlines the importance of creating a place and time for the truth to be told and recognized. It is about the offenders admitting their faults and the victims describing their pain and loss. Mercy balances the need for truth by also stressing the need for “letting go and a new beginning” (Lederach 2008, 29).

By justice Lederach underlines the importance of creating a new structure for a just society that focuses on the rights of the people. Justice also means that offenders have to take

responsibility for their wrong doing. Peace focuses on the future and the creation of a society of “interdependence, well-being and security” (Lederach 2008, 29) for all.

To Lederach these four aspects; truth, mercy, peace and justice are four equally important sides of reconciliation. As he pairs up two and two of them, he describes them as both conflicting and complementary to each other. He even claims that the conflicting energies, – the paradoxes, – are an essential part of reconciliation. “The basic paradigm of reconciliation therefore, embraces paradox” (Lederach 2008, 31).

Lisa Schirch offers a complementary description of reconciliation when she describes it as a table with three legs, – a relationship with “three interrelated support processes: healing trauma, transforming conflict and doing justice” (Schirch 2004, 46). One of the traits that this theory has in common with Lederach’s theories is that it demands a balance between different parts or approaches of reconciliation. If one of the three legs is neglected or receives too much attention, the whole reconciliation process is in danger. A balance of different approaches and initiatives is thus an important trait of a successful reconciliation process.

There is also another important commonality between Schirch and Lederach as they both describe the rebuilding of relationships as a fundamental trait of reconciliation. To Schirch the rebuilding of destroyed relationships is an important part of both trauma healing, transforming conflict and doing justice (Schirch 2004, 47; 49-51; 54).

The third common trait of Schirch’s and Lederach’s theory that I want to emphasize is their focus on dealing with the emotional and mental side of the conflict. This has to be done by dealing with the perceived mental picture and emotions that each side holds of the conflict, each other and themselves. Healing of wounds and transformation of stereotypes and emotions are important in this process (Schirch 2004, 47; 49-51).

2.4 Religion and Conflict

There is no doubt that religion has been both the motivating factor and the subject of many wars and violent conflicts. By being both intolerant, resistant to change, powerful and divisive religion has shed blood, spread hate and been the cause of loss and traumas. Also the fact that religions are often characterized by absolutism leaves little room for differences and negotiations.

In many wars the badge of religion has also been used as an identity sign to raise the fighting spirit of the people and motivate for violence in the name of God.³⁶

But religion is a double-edged sword, which also has been used to create peace and restore societies.

...religion as it relates to social conflict is a double-edged sword; it can cause conflict, or it can abate it...there is the other side to the coin of religious involvement, the helpful side that comes into play in varying degrees in each of these cases [we have studied]" (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 260).

Johnson and Sampson even argue that the role of religious leaders, religious institutions and religiously motivated lay figures plays an increasing role in the solving of modern conflicts (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 16). In recent years churches have also come to take their role as peace builders seriously. This has been both practically and theoretically. "Across the spectrum of the churches, there has been a rich development of theologies of reconciliation and an effort to explore their practical implications" (Cijka and Bambat 2004, 16).

There are many reasons why religion is playing an important role in modern peace building. Studies have been carried out outlining the assets of the different religions in peace building. In this thesis I will focus on the role of the Christian Church.

2.4.1 The Assets of the Christian Church in Building Peace

So what are the advantages that put the churches or other Christian institutions in a good position to build peace and create reconciliation? First of all it is important to underline that the following characteristics and advantages of the church are *possible* advantages or characteristics. In some settings they do exist in real life but in other settings they do not.

One common and practical advantage of churches is that many of them have a good and strong network that pretty much covers whole countries or regions. In some conflict – or post-conflict settings it can be the only coordinated and functioning network that binds the country or region together. Dr. Fr. Emmanuel Ntakarutimana describes this situation as it was in

³⁶ Johnson, Douglas, "Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: The Religious Dimension"; available from http://www.icrd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=200&Itemid=133; accessed 21 September 2010.

Burundi after the genocide in 1993: “The Church has strong networks with parishes covering all the corners of the countries and can be of great help in that area helping build the resilience capacity for individuals and for communities” (Ntakarutimana 2008, 7).

Often churches are also a part of an international network. This can be helpful both in raising awareness in the international community and in raising both human and financial resources to be useful in the peace and reconciliation process.³⁷

Another asset of churches is that they often hold a high position of credibility and moral authority in the eyes of the local community. In many cases it is “the only institution that has a moral legitimacy in the eyes of the populace” (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261). When a church is well respected by both sides of the conflict and at the same time holds a position of high moral credibility, it can serve as a neutral mediator, a facilitator and a moral authority in conflict resolution and reconciliation. “With trust, church sponsored efforts to resolve conflict are likely to be viewed as objective and fair” (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261).

Churches are normally perceived as institutions that both respect and promote values. Post conflict societies are often suffering from the lack of values and respect for other human beings. In such settings, churches that build their existence, actions and teaching on moral values, can play an important role in the necessary work of rebuilding values in individuals, institutions and the greater society. “The Church has an important role to play here as her mission is essentially related to the promotion of values” (Ntakarutimana 2008, 7).

Traditionally confession and repentance has been an important part of the teaching and practice of many churches. Since the church already has a theology and practice of confession and forgiveness, this can serve as an important asset in promoting reconciliation within the church as well as in the local and national community. “When the church displays a general commitment to confession, repentance, and forgiveness, they can also help undermine negative stereotypes and rehumanize relationships” (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261).

The church, its teachings and values, can also serve as an important source of empowerment and motivation to deal with the past and create a peaceful future (Cijka and Bamat 2004, 14). At the same time as values taught in the church can often be a motivation for pursuing reconciliation, the teaching and structure of the church can also serve as an empowerment for how to do this (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261).

³⁷ Johnson, Douglas, “Conflict Prevention.”

It is also significant to acknowledge the importance of prayer as a reconciling asset of the church. In addition to its perceived spiritual power, prayer has also a direct impact on the individuals committed to prayer. The very fact that church people pray for peace and reconciliation will serve as a promoter of these things in the hearts of individuals and in the soul of the community.

Beyond its direct impact on the individuals involved, group prayer offers a means for facing politically awkward ideas – admitting fault, expressing regrets, asking forgiveness, even acknowledging an adversary’s humanity (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261).

Churches that are deep-rooted in local communities will also have the character of being committed over a long period. This is very important as a reconciliation process will take time and be cyclical, before it can reach the goal of a sustainable peace (Lederach 2008, 136). One of the reasons for the long term commitment we often see from churches and religious leaders is that they often “operate out of a sense of calling; there is an inspired ability to persevere in the face of major, otherwise debilitating obstacles”.³⁸

As I already mentioned the churches do not always hold these assets of reconciliation in real life. One of the reasons for this can be that many churches have a hard time translating the good theology of reconciliation from words to action. Earlier on I described reconciliation as a rich and complex process with the need of finding a balance between different values and initiatives. This is not an easy process to handle even for professionals. For pastors or other religious leaders with little training both in theology and in the work of peace building, this can be even harder. The challenge of many churches is therefore to take time and find ways of analyzing the conflict and also the reconciliation process that they want to promote. What is the need? How can we promote this in a practical way? And what sort of tools should we use, are some of the questions that many churches needs to analyze and focus on.

The problem is that Justice, Peace and Reconciliation are spoken about in a repetitive way with a maintenance discourse without properly analyzing the situation first...The challenge is the acquisition of new methods for social and political analysis as well as new methods of intervening because Peace and Reconciliation are also very technical issues (Ntakarutimana 2008, 6)

³⁸ Johnson, Douglas, “Conflict Prevention.”

Whether religion is the cause of violence and conflict or it is a source of peace building and stabilization, it is time for the international society to pay more attention to religion, religious leaders, their values and institutions. This will both give a better understanding of the ongoing conflict and give better and more effective tools for peacebuilding and reconciliation.³⁹ I will now look specifically at the tools and values that makes up faith-based reconciliation.

2.5 Faith-based Reconciliation

In his book “Faith-Based Reconciliation – A Moral Vision That Transforms People and Societies”, Brian Cox talks about reconciliation as a *permanent moral vision* based on the Abrahamic tradition that he claims is shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims.⁴⁰ One of Cox’s colleagues of reconciliation, Douglas M. Johnston, tries to simplify the definition of faith-based reconciliation and describes it as “making religion part of the solution in some of the intractable, identity-based conflicts that exceed the grasp of traditional diplomacy.”⁴¹

Cox’s book focuses on eight core values; pluralism, inclusion, peacemaking, social justice, forgiveness, healing wounds, sovereignty, and atonement, that comprise faith-based reconciliation and lays the foundation for practical and specific faith-based initiatives. As Lederach focuses on the need for a balance between different values and initiatives, so does Cox. The eight values are therefore to be seen as interrelated and “designed to be kept in dynamic tension with each other (Cox 2007, 19-20).

Cox also stresses the spiritual dimension of reconciliation as he “reminds us that faith-based reconciliation is a journey of the soul, a spirituality that involves intense inner struggle as well as social engagement” (Cox 2007, 104).

Fundamental in Cox’ theory of faith-based reconciliation is also the nature and teaching of the sacred texts that are found in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He claims that the message of

³⁹ Johnson, Douglas, “Conflict Prevention.”

⁴⁰ Brian Cox does also involve values, traditions and believes of other religions in his faith-based approach to reconciliation. The core of his theory is however based on the common values of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

⁴¹ Johnson, Douglas, “Faith-based Diplomacy: Bridging the Religious Divide”, page 3; available from <http://bakerinstitute.org/publications/REL-pub-JohnstonFaithBasedDiplomacy-2009.pdf>; Internet; accessed 29 November 2010.

these sacred texts is rich in the teaching of the principles and values that constitute reconciliation. “What is often overlooked is the tremendous spiritual capacity for peacemaking and reconciliation that is embedded in the sacred texts and in the principles and practices of Judaism, Christianity and Islam” (Cox 2007, 119).

The starting point of this moral vision is the exodus of Abraham from his hometown, Ur in Chaldea. The exodus was caused by a divine calling where Abraham is called to bring blessing - “to heal, to repair and to transform the world” (Cox 2007, 17).

Cox goes on to identify common components and values in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. From this he defines his eight core values that he lays as the foundation and tools of faith-based reconciliation in the Abrahamic tradition.

Cox does not claim that members of the three Abrahamic religions are practicing the values of faith-based reconciliation or showing a good example on how this should be done, today. Rather he is claiming that individuals and groups of these traditions do have a chance to find the roots of sustainable reconciliation within their own traditions.

I will now give a brief outline of the already mentioned values as well as the benefits and tools they give to the practitioners and subjects of reconciliation.

Cox first value is *pluralism*. The pluralism and differences we see between people of different cultures are in essence created and desired by God. When we acknowledge this our identity differences will no longer become a source of conflict, but a source of thanksgiving to God for his creating power. It leads to “respect for the dignity of every human being” (Cox 2007, 29), no matter how big the differences seem. According to Cox the main tools to achieve this are bridge building and dialogue (Cox 2007, 35).

Inclusion, or overcoming hostility, is the second value of faith-based reconciliation.

According to Cox, inclusion contains two aspects. The first aspect is *us* choosing to relate to and treat others, even our enemies, “in a friendly way” (Cox 2007, 37). The second part of inclusion is *us* confronting the hostility and hate that we have in our heart towards others. Cox claims that the only way to confront this hostility is through a transformation of our heart. He also quotes Martin Luther King in arguing that only the supernatural power of God can transform a person’s heart (Cox 2007, 44-45).

The third value is *peacemaking*. A faith-based peacemaker draws knowledge and wisdom from both the discipline of mediation and conflict resolution as well as from the religious scriptures and practice. “By combining a spiritual and a secular approach faith-based

peacemakers are seeking to create a sustainable negotiated settlement but also a transformation of the relationships and the hearts of the parties toward each other” (Cox 2007, 49).

Faith-based peacemaking is also adding tools like “spiritual conversation, prayer and fasting and the use of rituals” (Cox 2007, 60), to the table.

The next value is *social justice*. Faith-based reconciliation builds on the belief that there is a universal moral code found in the sacred, religious texts. This common moral code is especially important when it comes to underlining “human dignity and the principle of loving your neighbor” (Cox 2007, 69). To build a just society it is therefore important to both change the structural systems of a society and the hearts of its inhabitants (Cox 2007, 71).

The fifth value of faith-based reconciliation is *forgiveness*. Forgiveness is the process of letting go of the need for revenge. This process is capable of both healing the wounds of the victim, the offender and the relationship. “Forgiveness is the key to healing relationships because it sets the individual or community free from the burden of anger, pain, hatred, resentment, and the desire for revenge (Cox 2007, 73). Forgiveness is a process with roots in the religious world, but also highlighted in secular approaches to reconciliation. Unique to a faith-based approach to forgiveness is that it recognizes that true forgiveness often requires “a supernatural intervention in the heart of the victim” (Cox 2007, 77).

Healing of historical wounds is the sixth value of faith-based reconciliation. According to Cox this is done through a four step process; acknowledgement, grieving, trauma therapy and restorative justice (Cox 2007, 86-90). The healing is an essential process in order to hinder the historical wounds from creating and sustaining “stereotyping and demonization between the different identity groups” (Cox 2007, 84). The healing of wounds is not specific to faith-based reconciliation, but the Abrahamic tradition does bring in some new aspects and tools. First of all it demands that the truth about the violent past, the base of the acknowledgement, is determined through “an honest conversation about the past, where informed and morally courageous people determine the past hurts and injustices that must be healed” (Cox 2007, 87). Faith-based reconciliation also suggests that on-site reconciliation ceremonies can “bring together leaders and representatives of both the perpetrators and the victims for the purpose of acknowledgement, confession, apology and forgiveness” (Cox 2007, 89).

Sovereignty – submission to the supreme authority of God – is the heart of faith-based reconciliation and also the seventh value described by Cox. By admitting and submitting to

God's sovereignty the mind and desires of individuals and groups can be changed from selfishness and greed to concern for common good in accordance to a "transcendent set of values" (Cox 2007, 97). Cox also believes that submission to God can serve as a motivation for change in unjust structures and politics.

Atonement is the final value of faith-based reconciliation. According to Cox, ultimate reconciliation between individuals can only happen when the individuals also seek reconciliation with God (Cox 2007, 107). Evil and sin is seen as an obstacle that creates conflict between men and between men and God. In order to remove that obstacle God offers atonement, "which is the process of becoming a person of faith" (Cox 2007, 110). Atonement is basically the process of reestablishing a relationship between God and man. When a person experiences the establishment of this new relationship with God, his highest loyalty "is no longer to family, clan, or nation but to God" (Cox 2007, 111). Through the relationship with God the person will experience a continual changing of the heart and life (Cox 2007, 112).

3. THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS WITHIN SOL

In this chapter I will describe the findings that I collected during my field study in the Springs of Life Lutheran Church in Kibera, Nairobi. The field study was conducted from January to March 2010, – about two years after the post election violence. During my time in Nairobi I interviewed eight church members and three church leaders about their experiences of the post election violence and the reconciliation process that followed.

I have divided this chapter into four parts. In the first part I want to look at *how* my informants were affected by the post election violence. In the second part I will describe the initiatives taken by SOL and the characteristics held by SOL, that had a reconciling affect. The next part of this chapter deals with the actual effect that these initiatives and characteristics had on the informants. In the last part I will look at some of the limitations and weaknesses that the reconciliation process of SOL had.

3.1 How Were SOL and Its Members Affected by the Post Election Violence?

In one or another way everybody in Kenya, Kibera and SOL was affected by the post election violence. My informants are not exceptions as they all gave me personal testimonies about what happened to them during the first two months of 2008 and how that affected them.

In this thesis I have chosen to divide the affect of the post election violence that was described to me into three levels; the physical, the emotional and the mental level. By affect on the physical level I refer to losses and physical wounds that were inflicted on my informants by the violence and looting. By affect on the mental level I first of all refer to the changes in the way people think as a result of the post election violence. By affect on the emotional level I refer to the stirring up of hate, fear and other emotional responses to the traumas caused to them by this violence. I will first give a short description on how my informants were physically affected, before moving into a more thorough description on how this again affected them on the emotional and mental level.

The post election violence in Kibera was described to me as complete turmoil where houses were burned, people were beaten and chased away from their homes, big mobs of young men were looting and harassing, chains of supply were broken and the markets and shops were destroyed. This is how *The elder* described how the members of SOL was physically affected during this time: “People in our congregation were affected...they were chased away, their house was either burned, stolen, looted and they had nowhere to go and no basic necessities” (The elder).⁴²

The hardest affected group was the Kikuyus. This was also backed by my informants. All of my Kikuyu informants told me that they had been chased away from their home and only one of them had later been allowed to move back to her house. They also told me how they had lost all of their belongings and one of them had even lost a child due to the violence.

Also some of my Luo and Kisi informants told me that they had been chased away from their houses, lost their belongings and were forced to live in IDP camps. The lack of food and other necessities was also described to me by some of my informants.

Even the church compound was affected as the chapel, the school and the medical clinic were looted and burned. At least three of my informants told me that they were witnessing this looting and burning.

I will now move on to the affect the post election violence had on the emotional level of my informants. As you can imagine the traces of emotional affect was easy to detect among my informants.

Trauma⁴³ is a term that is used to describe a situation or happening that causes the emotional affect of shock, fear and likewise. Though this is not a thesis of psychology nor psychiatry and I cannot go into details when it comes to traumas and trauma-counseling, I can still say that I found emotional wounds that can be described as the effect of traumas. None of my informants would mention the term *trauma*, but the way some of them described their own emotional situation after and during the post election violence fits well with the distress following a trauma. The elder, who was an eye witness to the dramatic looting and burning of SOL, described his emotions as he came back to his own house after witnessing the burning

⁴² Interview made in Nairobi, February 4th 2010.

⁴³ Definition of trauma: Experience that is “emotionally painful, distressful, or shocking, which often results in lasting mental and physical effects.” <http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=8171>

and looting, thus: “I could not sleep, I was very disturbed, things kept coming to my mind and so forth. Out there was confusion, people were looting everywhere ...” (The elder). One of my informants claims that he was not heavily affected by the post election violence, but still he described emotions like fear and in danger. He especially addressed these feelings to the presence of the rioting mobs of young Luo men. “It was hard times...me I was not that much affected, but I start to fear. I could not join these people, but they could just force somebody to join. Because ‘if you cannot do it, then you are against us’, and then they would come against you” (Informant 7).

Another sort of emotional affect I detected was the stirring up of hate and bitterness. One of my heavily affected Kikuyu informants described her new and enforced hate, after losing her house and being chased away, this way: “There is some bitterness. We struggle and have a hard time, and then you know that just a little boy has been given your house and is eating in there. You just feel bitterness and even feel like killing them” (Informant 5).⁴⁴

One of my non-Kikuyu informants also described the increase of hostile emotions as a result of the post election violence. Contrary to the Kikuyu informant I referred to above, he was not chased from his house, but he felt betrayed by the political system, president Kibaki and the whole Kikuyu tribe, as Kibaki was announced the winner of the highly contested presidential election: “I feel that they stole the election. I felt that my love for them had gone down. That was on a general level, but I still had my friends” (Informant 3).⁴⁵

My informants were also affected mentally by the post election violence. The most obvious traces of such affect was the ethnic stereotypes that were created or enforced in the mind of my informants. Generally it seemed to me that the Kikuyus held an enforced stereotype of people of the other tribes, and especially the Luos, that described them as lazy and violent.

We say they did this because they just want to have property that they do not need to work for. Because you could see many of them carry big things from rich people’s houses into the slums. We are saying they enjoy doing this because they are benefiting from it. They will chase you and take your property so that they will benefit. We think that they are still lazy (Informant 5).

⁴⁴ Interview made in Nairobi the 11th of February 2010

⁴⁵ Interview made in Nairobi the 5th of March 2010

In this quote we can see how the informant characterizes the whole Luo tribe by the traits that were characteristic for the Luo-mobs during the post election violence. It is therefore plausible to believe that this stereotype was enforced as a result of the post election violence. On the other side my non-Kikuyu informants held stereotypes of the Kikuyus that characterized them as tribal and thieves. “They are too much tribalistic these people [the Kikuyus]. These thing are inborn in Kikuyu. They are inborn with this type of thing, being tribalistic” (Informant 6).⁴⁶ Tribalism and favoring of Kikuyus is one of the things that president Kibaki is accused of, and also one of the reasons why the presidential election stirred up so much hate and violence. It is probable to believe that this stereotype was also enforced during the post election violence.

The post election violence also changed other areas of cognitive behavior and mental picture. This was especially obvious in the new ways people were thinking about elections. To some of my informants elections were now perceived as something negative and two of them told me that they would never vote again. This is how one of them put it. “The voting was what made everything go wrong. If voting can make people do things like this, I better not vote again” (Informant 2).⁴⁷

Even though none of my informants, and as far as I know none of the church members, participated in the violence, some of them admitted that they did understand the motives, emotions and actions of the people taking part in the post election violence. “I was angry and I understand their feeling. The people even removed the railway line” (Informant 6). This cognitive process of understanding and to a certain degree empathizing with the participants of the post election violence can also be described as a mental affect of the violence.

So how did the church members respond to this massive effect that was caused by the post election violence? As I have already discussed, many of them described feelings of hate, bitterness and an urge for revenge, but according to my informants none of them put this into practice.

Only one of my informants told me that he took part in the violence and rioting. This person was however not a member of SOL at that time. “I was taking part in the violence. Even I was

⁴⁶ Interview made on the 28th of February 2010

⁴⁷ Interview made on the 1st of February 2010

throwing stones” (Informant 8).⁴⁸ He then explains his motivation for taking part in the violence this way: “It was upon us to revenge” (Informant 8). All the other informants denied that they took part in the violence. One other informant told me though that he took part in political, non-violent demonstrations.

3.2 What Kind of Initiatives Did SOL Take, and What Kind of Characteristics Did SOL Have, That Promoted Reconciliation Among Its Members and Its Neighborhood?

In this part of my thesis I will primarily look at the initiatives and ongoing process that the leaders of the church said they started and carried out. I will also look at some characteristics and aspects of the church that is said to have a reconciling affect. My informants for this is *the deacon, the elder and the pastor*.

In general I can say that SOL did not start any specific reconciliation programs or projects. They did however carry out initiatives to help people that suffered physically from post election violence, they did participate and facilitate initiatives taken by NGOs, and they carried out their daily work with services, bible studies, counseling, a medical clinic, a sports program and a school.

First I will discuss how the church leaders see the service as a tool of reconciliation and how they used this in order to promote it.

SOL uses a strict and fixed liturgy in their services. According to the pastor the liturgy of the service is also the most important tool of reconciliation in their church. The liturgy contains confession of sins, absolution of sins, singing of hymns, fixed prayers, bible reading, the creed, a sermon, offering and sacraments. According to the pastor the entire liturgy is Christ focused and all of the invocations he uses are direct quotes from the Bible. “The liturgy is focused 100% on Jesus and the liturgy comes from the way people worshiped even back to the apostles. And what is unique in this hymnal is that the invocation comes from the bible” (The pastor).

So how is the liturgy a part of the reconciliation process of SOL? According to the pastor the aim of the service is first of all to reconcile men with God. As a result of this the faith of the people will grow in a practical way that will lead them to start loving their neighbor. This love

⁴⁸ Interview made on the 4th of February 2010

is then seen as a cornerstone of the reconciliation in and around the church. “That is the reconciliation program that we are passing on to our community” (The pastor).

The pastor also believes that sin, including tribalism, hate and stereotypes are completely gone from the congregation during the service and especially during the Holy Communion, where the belief is that God touches them in a very special way. “It [sin] is totally gone during the communion, but as soon as you turn and walk away sin comes back” (The pastor). The pastor sees the participation in the service in general and in the Holy Communion especially as an important tool in fighting sin and promoting love and reconciliation. Just the fact that church members are participating in this is therefore seen as a tool of reconciliation. “The beauty of being Lutheran is to recognize that reconciliation is there in the liturgy” (The pastor).

The services also contain other and more specific tools of reconciliation between men. Forgiveness is taught and the people that harmed the congregation during the post election violence have in public been offered forgiveness even though they did not ask for it.

On the other hand the pastor says that he has not been pinpointing his message specifically on reconciliation after the post election violence. According to him little or nothing has changed in his sermons to address reconciliation differently now than before the post election violence.

It was easy. I did not have to do anything different from normal. Just keep teaching, keep preaching and keep following the liturgy normally and everything just takes care of itself ... I did not have to do anything different, I just had to make sure that I, as a sinful human being, did not go the wrong direction ... my challenge was not to waiver off what we teach, preach and confess (The pastor).

In addition to underscoring the importance of the content of the service, the pastor also believes that the basic character trait of “congregating” has a reconciling affect in SOL “Anytime you can get people to fellowship is a good asset for reconciliation” (The pastor). A church service is a good example of such a place of fellowship. In addition to worshipping together the church members also socialize and get to know each other in the time before and after the service. Except from the first Sunday of the post election violence, SOL did congregate and worship all the Sundays during this period. This is mentioned and believed to have had a reconciling and comforting effect by both the pastor and the elder. “Then there is the comfort and you see your fellow brother there and then you are there, you share and then

you have the sermon. You hear the very message of God giving comfort. That was a blessing to the heart of people” (The elder).

The elder I interviewed also mentioned some of the dynamics that took place between the members when they gathered for a service or just met on the church compound. He thinks that the dynamic of sharing what happened and the dynamic of being able to speak out the bad things that happened to you, helped start the reconciliation process among the church members. Especially when these dynamics are combined with the sermon, he believes that these dynamics have a strong and positive influence. “As we came to learn later that was also a healing process” (The elder). This informant does however say that these dynamics were not planned or organized by the church. It all happened in a spontaneous and informal way.

According to my informants there are also other aspects, characteristics and initiatives taken by SOL that can have a reconciling affect. The pastor, the elder and the deacon of SOL mentioned that the congregation treated everybody the same no matter what tribe they belong to. This was setting a good example for the church members and the community of how to treat people of other tribes in a loving and equal way. It was in the area of social work that this way of treating people was especially visible.

The acts of mercy will play a key-role in reconciliation, because it is this way the church reaches out and treat all people the same. We are meeting their need as a person regardless of their tribe. I look at that as a primary action for how the church is dealing with reconciliation (The deacon).

Treating people equally, regardless of their tribe, is also important in the service and in meeting the spiritual needs of the people.

During, and also after, the post election violence SOL was active in helping the victims and needy with food, shelter, clothing and money for transport for the people that wanted to go back to their area of origin to escape the violence. The pastor and his wife even opened up their house for forty eight people during the first part of post election violence. The help was paid for from the pastors own account, from the church and from foreign support (The deacon). The shortage of food in Kibera during the time of violence also led the church to organize the smuggling of food into the slum.

I would get some boys who would sneak out of Kibera and meet the pastor somewhere where there is a food stack... Then he would buy basic necessities and then he would

pack them in sacks ... then the church boys would take the sacs very quickly into the slum ... For those who are in total need we would call them and they would come and take some that would last for a day or two (The elder).

The congregation is also running a medical clinic at the church compound. Here everybody is treated the same and receives the same help regardless of their tribe. On the same compound there is also a school that receives needy children from different tribes. According to my informants, both of these institutions are acting and teaching in a way that promotes reconciliation. This is done both by being an example of how to treat people equally, but also by giving desperate people hope and help in a time of need. SOL also has a program that reaches out to people with HIV and Aids, another program that reach out to single mothers and finally a program for poor families with special needs.

SOL also runs a small sports program. Originally it was supposed to offer both facilities and trainings for people who wanted to play basketball and volleyball. At the time of my visit it was only the volleyball team that was up and going. Every afternoon a group of between ten and twenty youths (only boys) gathered at the church compound to play. The youths came from “many different tribes and most of them were from outside the church” (Informant 7). After the practice the group sat down, talked and prayed. Post election violence, tribalism and reconciliation was issues during these informal meetings.

What we end up talking about is that we should not treat other tribes the way we have been treating them. That is reconciliation. I know it would come from people that are involved from my congregation. I know there is conversation about tribalism. He [a youth leader from the church] would say that tribalism is wrong (The pastor).

SOL also provides bible studies for its members. Every Saturday there is a specific bible study for youths led by the pastor or youth leaders. These youth meetings would address issues like tribalism and reconciliation (The elder).⁴⁹

In addition to this there are also informal bible studies going on in the church compound throughout the week. People are coming to the church to find answers to their questions, comfort and counseling and sometimes to confess and receive forgiveness.

⁴⁹ The youth meetings were not specifically targeting reconciliation. Reconciliation was just one out of many topics that was discussed and taught.

Even when I am here during the day, we are always teaching. We are always having bible studies on a subject that brings them here to see us ... We listen, we counsel, we study the bible which give them forgiveness of sin, which give them strength and now they are prepared to not conform to the world (The pastor).

Bible studies and Confirmation is also offered and required by the church in order for individuals to participate in the Holy Communion.

SOL has also facilitated and participated in some meetings that specifically had reconciliation on the agenda. These meetings were however not initiated or headed by SOL. My informant, the elder, told me that these meetings took place twice in SOL. The first meeting, that was targeted towards leaders, called for them to take their role as leaders and comforters seriously during the time of violence. The other meeting was targeting the youth. It was initiated by a Christian NGO and dealt with the causes, the incidents and the solution of the post election violence. Also people from neighboring congregations and the neighborhood were invited to these meetings.

An asset of SOL that is said to be a help in promoting reconciliation within and around the congregation is the international links they have. One of the reasons for this is that SOL receives funding from the USA, Norway and Great Britain in order to carry out the social work. They have also received funding from international partners in rebuilding the church, the medical clinic and the school. Both the social work and the facilities have been an asset for the church in the reconciliation process.

Every year the congregation also receives many international guests, me included, that visit the church compound and often also church members. According to the elder I interviewed, such visits bring comfort to the people that are visited.

The last asset of reconciliation that I found in SOL during my interviews with the church leaders was spiritual and seemingly supernatural incidents. The first incident that was mentioned originated from the time when the church building was burned. Among the things within the church that was burned was the altar. On the altar was a big bible that was used during the services. This bible was totally destroyed except for one little piece. This piece contained these bible verses from the book of Psalm 124:1-3:

If it had not been that the Lord was with us, let Israel now say: If it had not been that the Lord was with us, When men rose up against us perhaps they had swallowed us up alive. When their fury was enkindled against us.

This incident was seen as a miracle and proof that God had been there to protect them during the post election violence.

The second incident that was mentioned to me was a rather sad story. During the looting and burning of the church, one of the members of the mob put on the pastors garments and used the bread and the wine, dedicated to the communion, in a mocking ceremony. Three days later this young man died of unknown reasons. The community, the church members and the local newspapers understood his death as punishment for the disrespectful and evil deeds that he had carried out.

The third spiritual incident was explained to me by Informant 1. During the post election violence the mob came to her house and wanted to burn it down. At that time her daughter was visiting her from America. Even though the whole family was Kikuyu, the daughter also spoke Luo – the language of the members of the mob. When the mob came the daughter spoke to them in perfect Luo and as a result of this the house was spared. The mob even protected the house against other mobs. Nothing bad happened to the family or the house. This was seen as a miracle from God.

3.3 What Sort of Reconciling Effect Did These Initiatives and Characteristics of SOL Have on Its Members and Community?

I have now been looking at the reconciliation initiatives and characteristics that the church leaders say describe SOL in the time after the post election violence. I will now try to find evidence that these initiatives and characteristics actually had a reconciling affect on the grassroots members of the church and its community. My informants in this sub-chapter are eight grassroots members of SOL and the elder.

To get a better overview of my findings in this part of the thesis I have decided to present the reconciliation story of all the nine informants one by one. In these stories I will present their own testimony of reconciliation. I will look for different aspects of reconciliation that they have been through and I will try to establish facts about what made them go through these processes.

Informant 6 said that he had changed his way of feeling and thinking about the enemy tribes since the post election violence. He said that he had been going to many different forums and listening to many different lectures about how to reconcile and live in peace. Most of these forums and lectures had not been organized in SOL but in the community.

Me I think I am changed. I am friends with Kikuyus. We exchange ideas, we share and we also eat together and we stay together ... after learning that we are one people, there is no need for us to fight...after going to many forums and after getting lectures I just felt that I am changed (Informant 6).

Informant 6 did however give some of the credit for his changed mind and emotions to the church. He especially emphasized the importance of the teaching of peace and love. "We are always preaching peace and we are always requesting everyone to stay in peace and love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Informant 6).

He was however a little ambivalent about the effect biblical teaching has on the church members. He said that it had changed many people, but that other church members are acting, in their daily life as if they were not changed. "It depends on individuals", he concludes.

Informant 2 was not a member of SOL during the post election violence, but became a member through the way that the congregation treated her during this time. At the time of my interview she had been a member of the church for two years. After the post election violence she said that she hated the people that harmed her, but she now says that she has forgiven them. She also says that she decided to forgive after she had sat down and talked to the pastor about this issue. "When the pastor came with his wife they sat down and talked. Now the pastor started preaching to me about love and then I decided to forgive people. But before those teaching I felt total hate towards them" (Informant 2).

During the interview she also says that there still is a lot of ethnic hate in the community where she lives, but she claims that she likes the people of the enemy tribe. She says that the members of SOL has a good knowledge of the Bible and then she gives this knowledge some of the credit for the lower level of tribalism in the church. As far as I understand her answer she also says that that is the reason why she now is able to treat all people the same regardless of their tribal affiliation.

In the Lutheran church people know much from the bible stories. That's why there is no tribalism in the church ... Because of the word of God, you cannot say that if this one has beaten my child I can't help her or if this one has done this I can't help her. That is what is in our church. That's why there is no tribalism in the Kingdom of God (Informant 2).

The informant does not mention the practical help she received during the post election violence as a direct reason for her choice to forgive and reconcile with her offenders, but she talks a lot about the pastor's and the church's compassion and help when she explains why she joined the church. "When I talked [shared the problems] to the pastor and the pastor reacted quickly and started helping me, then I decided to worship here" (Informant 2).

Even though the compassion and practical help was not mentioned as an explanation for her ability to forgive and treat people the same regardless of tribal affiliation, I see these initiatives and characteristics as an indirect explanation for this. I will explain this link further in chapter four.

Informant 3 told me that "my love for them [the Kikuyus] had actually gone down" (Informant 3) as a result of the proclaimed result of the president election and the following violence. He then explained that just recently he had been able to love Kikuyus the way he loved them before. "It is now, by God's grace that I have managed to fully recover" (Informant 3).

According to my informant the reason for his recovery is that he has regularly been coming together with people from all different tribes in church and at school. He then explains the importance of the church fellowship this way:

The issue of Holy Communion, we all come and celebrate Holy Communion together. Whatever tribe you are, we all and participate from the same table. We break bread together. That is something that really makes people understand. Just coming together and sitting at the pews there and listening to the word of God it does not matter who is my neighbor ... that serves as a way of bringing us together (Informant 3).

The informant also emphasized the importance of the teaching of values and love that he found in SOL.

Church is actually a good place. I cannot overemphasize it, where you grow spiritually, where you are taught these good values of faith and of love. When you

really come to understand that, you come to appreciate everyone as unique and they have been created by God with a divine purpose and you want to help them realize that (Informant 3).

Informant 4 claims that she now is a new person and that the hate she felt after and during the post election violence is gone. She explains the transformation from hate to love this way:

“Because the violence settled down ... I also forgave them ... I realized that there is no way that I can trace those things that were stolen [from me] so I said to God ‘give me another life’” (Informant 4).⁵⁰

When I asked her about how she managed to forgive she explains this first of all with the help and support that she received from her friends and the church.

My friends helped me with some things that were stolen and they supported me. There is no way I continue to hate, so I decided to forgive ... There is compassion in this church. I also see the true love. When I came here, the wife of the pastor [which is from an enemy tribe] welcomed me and they are even sponsoring my children by paying their school fees (Informant 4).

She also explains her decision and ability to forgive with the teaching she has received in the church: “From the church they teach us ‘try your best to forgive’. I keep going to church and I try to fulfill the commandments of God on how to forgive” (Informant 4).

During the interview with informant 1 I could not find any trace of hate nor tribalism. She was physically affected by the post election violence, but claims that God miraculously protected her from being affected in a more severe way. Her strong belief in God’s provision might be one of the reasons why I could not find any trace of mental nor emotional affect in her life. Informant 1 also told me that some of the people that came and took her house and threatened to burn it during post election violence are now visiting her as friends. Through her belief and what she claims is God’s protection she has also been able to influence these people. One of them told her: “Mother we shall be praying to your God, because we have seen the power of him. When he can protect you like he did, we shall be worshiping your God” (Informant 1).⁵¹

⁵⁰ Interview made on the 14th of February 2010

⁵¹ Interview made on the 3rd of February 2010

Through her actions she has also been a tool of reconciliation to the community. Some of the actions that she told me about are:

- She has been living among people from enemy tribes for 37 years
- She offered to and cooked a meal for the people that came to burn her house
- She greeted another mob of youth, one by one, with her hand

These actions probably influenced the mobs and also other people from enemy tribes to respect her, protect and defend her and befriend her. This can be seen as proof of reconciliation.

This informant also says that there is no tribalism or fighting within the church. She explains this by the effect of prayers and the teaching of the pastor.

Informant 7 says that he tried to stay as much as he could within the church compound during the post election violence. The reason for that was that he did not want his mind to be influenced and corrupted by ethnic stereotyping and hate. By doing this he was instead influenced by the teaching of the church. He sums up the essence of this teaching thus: “We are created by one God so we have to love each other as the Bible says. Their blood is my blood” (Informant 7).

He also gives credit to a two day long seminar that was facilitated by SOL for helping him and the other participants to live in peace again. Professional peace makers spoke, dramas were performed and pastors held sermons on peace and love.

He also mentioned that the volleyball team started by SOL has influenced himself and people around him. He especially thinks that the times when the pastor joined them at the end of the practice to speak about and address the problems has had a reconciling affect on the youths and himself. “After we finished the practice we could call on him [The pastor] and he would come and talk to us and pray for us. He addressed the issues of the violence. That was the main aim of starting the volleyball team” (Informant 7).

Informant 7 also believes that the minds of the players were changed through this. According to him the main reason for these changes is that the Word of God, about peace and love, was taught.

Informant 5 does admit that she still feel bitterness and hate towards the ones that chased her out of her house and caused her problems in many ways. She does however underline that she

loves all the people in SOL even those who belong to her enemy tribes. She also says that she does not feel any hostile feelings or stereotyping towards herself and her tribe from people within the church. She thinks that the reason that there is less tribalism and more reconciliation within the church is that “they come to worship God and they learn more than those people that do not attend church. What they believe in church I will also believe so we will be as one“(Informant 5). She especially highlights the importance of the church’s teaching on forgiveness: “The church is showing us how forgiveness works. When we see how Gods is forgiving people, we will try to do the same ... They are preaching and teaching us how to take them back and forgive them” (Informant 5).

Another aspect of reconciliation within the church that she mentioned is the sense of regret that some people feel for what happened during the post election violence. “Many of the people are seeing that what they did was wrong ... Some have found me and told me to come back to my place” (Informant 5). Informant 5 says that this regret from the enemy tribe is helping her to forgive and love.

Informant 8 did not belong to SOL or call himself a believer during the time of post election violence. This informant also admits to having taken part in the riots after the election. Through something he explains as a vision he became a believer and joined the church one year ago. After that he told me his life was changed in many ways. It also helped him change his mind about tribalism and start on the road towards reconciliation. Today he would not have participated in the riots and fighting of the post election violence. “It is bad. Today, if I got into fighting, regardless of the tribe, I could sit down and talk to them. We are one and God created us one by one ... I should make them the people of God” (Informant 8).

After informant 8 became a believer he regularly attended bible studies with one of the pastors in SOL. He accredits these bible studies for the fact that he now thinks differently about tribalism. When I asked him if there are any stories or sermons from the bible studies that influenced him more than others, he mentioned the example of how Christ treated his twelve disciples equally. Informant 8 has been trying to put himself and his tribe in the situation of one of the disciples and the enemy tribe in the situation of one of the other disciples. When he then sees how Jesus treated them all the same, he understands that he also has to treat all people the same regardless of their tribal background. “I normally came for bible studies. After that my life is better. I used to come every week. Change of thinking came a bit by bit” (Informant 8).

Informant 8 also thinks that social activities, like the volleyball team, are important in order to promote reconciliation and solve problems. Spending time together, having fun and getting to know each other lays, according to him, a good foundation for solving problems. “We are then in a good position to talk and solve problems” (Informant 8).

Informant 8 told me that he is spreading the message of love and a peaceful coexistence between the tribes to his friends outside SOL. By these actions he is a tool of reconciliation to the community.

My last informant for this section of my thesis is the elder. He lives in the midst of the slum and was also affected, especially mentally and emotionally, during the post election violence. One of the things that helped him find healing was the bible verse that was left and found in the church after it was burnt. “It was a part of my personal healing after the traumatic happenings” (The elder).

The elder also mentions the importance of a reconciliation meeting organized by NCKK that he attended. The meeting gathered all the bishops organized in NCKK. For three days they were together, shared their experiences and gave hope to each other.

As one of the leaders of the congregation, the elder, is a tool of reconciliation for the members of SOL and to the community. According to himself, people are coming to him as a pastor searching for comfort and help. “I have been involved in talking to them ... They are calling me and we share about these things. I have been directly involved with the youth” (The elder). The elder also thinks that some of the other members of the church have been tools of reconciliation in this way.

The elder also told me a story about how the volleyball team they started, in an indirect way affected people in a reconciling way. As the team was playing other youths from the neighborhood were passing by and when they saw this initiative taken by the church they said: “‘Lord forgive me if I participated in the looting of this church’ ... I think that somehow this guilty conscience feeling is making people realize the wrong that they did. This is also a part of reconciliation” (The elder).

As I already have mentioned, a young man that participated in the burning of the church and also took on the pastors robe and mocked the Holy Communion, died mysteriously just three days after the event. The elder has heard testimonies from people that have come to feel regret as a result of this story. “It was a big thing. People would connect that. They would say

‘Maybe God is angry with us?’ These are things that have been talked about, and I think this is positive areas of regret” (The elder).

3.4 What Are the Weaknesses and Limitations of the Reconciliation Within and Around SOL?

I have now given space to testimonies and evidence of the affect of the reconciliation initiatives and characters of SOL. Unfortunately there are also evidence that prove the limitations and weaknesses of the reconciliation process in and around SOL. In this sub-chapter I will first give attention to evidence of surviving traces of tribalism, ethnic stereotyping, wounds and hate. I will then mention the reconciliation initiatives that my informants were missing in the reconciliation process of SOL. In the end I will look at the limitation that different aspects of the context of SOL put on the outcome of its reconciliation process.

As I showed in sub-chapter 3.1, tribalism could still be found in SOL where it was materializing itself as negative stereotyping of enemy tribes and hate/hostility towards the same groups.

Informant 6 was saying that tribalism was not visible when people were gathering in the church, but when these same people were coming home to their neighborhood they were acting in a bad and tribal way.

I know some of them, they do very bad things, and then when they come to church it is like they never do such kind of things. They act in a way that they are so good ... Going to church does not change them ... The word of God should be able to change them, it happens to many people (Informant 6).

Also informant 7 also confirmed that there was still tribalism within the church. He claimed that tribalism was found in the blood of Kenyans, including the members of SOL. According to this informant the members of the church did not hate each other, but he admitted to the fact that there were strong ethnic stereotypes among them.

The pastor of SOL gave me examples on how tribalism was still manifesting itself in SOL. He told the story of how church members had tried to force another person from a certain tribe to resign from a position within the church. He also told me that there always were tribal concerns during elections of elders in the church.

Most of my informants were satisfied with the reconciliation initiatives that had been taken and carried out by SOL, but some of them did mention initiatives that they missed in the reconciliation process in and around SOL. These informants believed that the implementation of their proposed initiatives could have made the reconciliation process in SOL more effective.

Informant 6 told me that he wanted more preaching on peace and reconciliation. He also wanted more forums where SOL could bring the message of equality to the people of the community.

I think we should have some forums where we teach civic education, not only here, but in many places ... we go and talk to these people, we bring them together and we say that everyone is equal ... The people in this church have never come up with this idea (Informant 6).

Informant 3 did recognize that SOL was putting forth some reconciliation initiatives, but he thought that the congregation could have done much more. He proposed that SOL could have organized public meetings where politicians and other prominent people could speak to the community about the problems of tribalism and the solution of reconciliation. He also asked for the pastor to teach more specifically on forgiveness. Another thing he missed was activities and structures that could bring people of different tribes together. He mentioned sports, education and youth camps.

We need more activities, things and structures that would really unite people together and reconcile ... We could organize public meetings. The church has that ability to bring together some politicians for instance. People come together and share and speak out what they have to say. We could teach on forgiveness (Informant 3).

Informant 8 wanted more regular bible studies in SOL. He said that bible studies changed his mind and life and he thought it could also change the life and mind of other members of SOL in a reconciling way. "We should have bible study. We would sit down and chat. We are listening, what is the problem, we talk ... We should have more of that" (Informant 8).

I also asked the pastor whether he thought he could have done more or anything different in order for the reconciliation within SOL to be more effective. He did admit that he maybe could have done things different or better. "Maybe I could [pinpoint the message more on

reconciliation and tribalism] and maybe I am just not doing a very good job, but I do the best I can do” (The pastor).

When asked what he and SOL could have done for reconciliation to be more effective he suggested more of the same medicine that he already has been subscribing to – Christ-based liturgy. “This is the only solution. Christ is the only solution” (The pastor).

According to the pastor, having service only once a week probably was not enough, recognizing that church members the rest of the week were being bombarded and influenced by the tribalism that existed in the communities where the members were living. He did however not think that it was possible to gather them more often since they were busy just surviving the rest of the week. “That is tough because a lot of the people are even working seven days a week for a little money” (The pastor).

Another limitation for the reconciliation process in Kenyan churches in general and maybe also in SOL, was the lack of credibility they enjoyed in the society during and after the post election violence. In the time leading up to the presidential election in 2007 the churches credibility deteriorated step by step as church leaders took sides in the presidential campaigns. Bishops and other clergies would in general queue up and lend the pulpit to the presidential candidate from their own tribe. At the same time they stopped criticizing “their” presidential candidate when he did something bad or wrong. By doing this the churches became a part of the problem of tribalism and also a part of the cause of the post election violence. With this reputation the churches lost their integrity and credibility. Their positions as comforters, healers, peacemakers and reconcilers were either lost or at least weakened. Informant 3 commented on this situation: “When the church remains silent when the evil is going on, when you don’t say ‘hey, this is bad’, they ask what is the essence of having a church in this place, if evil is going on in this place and church is not speaking out against it” (Informant 3).

Many of my informants accredited the good values, the teaching of forgiveness, the compassion and practical help of SOL for their ability to be healed and start a process of reconciliation. Some of my informants were at the same time missing the dimension of justice in the reconciliation process. Two of them were applying this lack of justice to their own situation where they had been chased away from their houses, lost everything, and still were denied the possibility of returning to their homes. “True reconciliation is when these people stay back together where they were and peace will be all over” (Informant 5). Informant 6 does however admit that it is hard for the church to make a difference in this issue. “Going

back is hard because it is an issue of the landlord and the tenant. It will be difficult for the church to convince the landlord. It is a very difficult issue” (Informant 6).

One of these informants was also applying the lack of justice after post election violence to the general situation of reconciliation in Kenya. She (Informant 5) was calling for the ICC to prosecute the ones responsible for the post election violence as she did not trust the legal system of Kenya to do this in a fair and just way.

Many of the churches in Kenya cannot be characterized as multi-ethnic. Instead they often serve as the spiritual home for one or a few tribes. This is also the case with ELCK and SOL. According to the General Secretary of ELCK, John Halake, the affiliation is dominated by the ethnic groups of Kisis and Luos. According to my informant this is also the case with SOL. As far as I was told there are today only three Kikuyu families in the congregation. Since the primary aim of reconciliation is to restore relationships between antagonists, in this case Kikuyus on one side and people of other tribes on the other side, the lack of multi-ethnicity within SOL, limits the possibility for a true reconciliation.

Also the neighborhood of SOL, Gatwekera, is predominantly populated by Luos, Kisis and Luhjas. Most of the rare Kikuyus that used to live in this area were chased away during the post election violence and have since then not been able to move back. This ethnic cleansing of Gatwekera is limiting the possibility for interaction between the enemy tribes of the post election violence and thus also limiting the possibility for a true reconciliation.

The very last weakness or limitation of the reconciliation process in SOL that I will mention is related to a specific reconciliation project that ELCK, the church affiliation of SOL, organized after the post election violence. As far as I understand from the project documents and the interviews I made with involved persons, this was a good project that was able to contribute important elements into the reconciliation process in the local congregations involved. For some reason SOL, probably one of the most affected congregations in ELCK, was not invited to the meetings and seminars of this project. By being left out of this project, SOL lost the possibility to take advantage of its professional and spiritual reconciliation initiatives.

4. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS IN SOL

In the first part of this chapter I will be categorizing and analyzing my findings. After that I will compare these findings with the theories of chapter two. In the third part of this chapter I will try to draw some conclusions about what worked and what did not work so well in the reconciliation process in SOL. I will also try to find explanations for this. Lastly I will, on the basis of these conclusions, come up with some recommendations on how reconciliation processes can be carried out in a way that will have a stronger and more sustainable affect than the one in SOL.

4.1 Analyzing and Categorizing of my Findings

My informants and probably most of the other members of SOL were both physically, mentally and emotionally affected by the post election violence. Two years after the violence, during my visit to Kibera, it seemed that most of them had gone through some sort of reconciliation process, but that they still had a way to go. Many of the worst affected victims of post election violence had received material and physical support in order to survive and move on during and after the violence. The support that was mentioned to me included food, furniture, basic things for the house, shelter, transport money, school fees for the children and support to start up businesses. I did not find evidence that this physical and material support had a direct reconciling effect on my informants, but it might have had other effects that in an indirect way have contributed to the reconciliation process. For two of my informants (2 and 8) it led them into contact with and the influence of SOL. This has later had a reconciling effect on these informants. Other informants (2 and 4) told me that the material support and the compassion that motivated it, was one of the reasons why they attended the congregation. Without this support these informants would probably have left the church and been out of reach for other and more direct reconciliation initiatives and characteristics.

Another indirect reconciling effect of the physical support was that it put forth a good example and taught the value of treating everyone the same. My informants (2, 4 and the deacon) told me that SOL supported everyone that needed it – regardless of the tribe. Since SOL is regarded by many as a Luo church and since the wife of the pastor is in charge of the deacon work in the church, is a Luo, the material support and compassion became especially important for the reconciliation process of the Kikuyus in SOL.

Also the mental and emotional effect that post election violence had on my informants has in various ways been attempted by SOL. The main mental affect that the violence had on my informants seemed to be the creation of new ethnic stereotypes- and enforcing of old ones (Informants 5 and 6). SOL first of all tried to meet this by teaching and preaching equality from a biblical perspective. Many of my informants (6, 2, 3, 1 and 8) told me about how this had helped them on the way towards reconciliation. It seems however that many, if not most, of the informants still have a long way to go in order to overcome their stereotypes.

According to my findings, ethnic stereotyping is the strongest evidence for the continued existence of tribalism and thus the need for further reconciliation within SOL.

The emotional affect of the post election violence was many sided. Hate, fear, sleeplessness, and bitterness are some of the affects mentioned to me. Manifold are the initiatives and characteristics of SOL that are trying to heal these effects and start the process of reconciliation. One of the characteristic that has contributed to the healing of the emotional wounds is the fact that the congregation congregates. Coming together, sharing their experiences, and just being together has had a comforting affect on many of my informants (3,7 and 8). Also the spiritual aspect of the church was frequently mentioned as a comforter. This includes listening to the sermon, praying, participating in the Holy Communion and participating in Bible study classes. Also the belief in evidence of divine interaction has had a comforting and healing affect on some of my informants (the elder). The healing f traumas and emotional wounds is not necessarily reconciliation by itself, but it is a necessary foundation for the continuous process of reconciliation.

According to my understanding it seems that SOL has been contributing significantly by laying a good foundation for reconciliation. It has had a healing affect on its members, it has shown compassion and given material help, it has been a good example on equality, it has preached to –, and influences members with good values and it has been a place where evidence of divine interaction has been believed manifested. On the other hand SOL has not been able to fight the ethnic stereotyping of its members. The situation might be better within

SOL than outside, but stereotyping is still a strong force within SOL. In addition to this, the main aim of reconciliation; the restoration and establishment of relationships between antagonists, has only taken place on a very small scale. The main reason for this is that neither SOL nor its community is multiethnic in character. There are Kikuyus within SOL and Gatwekera, but in a very small number. The possibility of interethnic interaction and building of relationships is therefore limited. This limited interethnic interaction is probably also one of the reasons why ethnic stereotyping still has a strong foothold in SOL and its neighborhood.

4.2 In the Light of the Theories

There are some important differences in the approach of the reconciliation theories I refer to in this thesis and the reconciliation process that took place within SOL.

One of the main differences is that the theories are describing structured, planned and strategically implemented reconciliation initiatives. This can be found throughout the theories of both Lederach, Cox and Schirch. On the other side SOL did neither have much planned initiatives nor a formulated strategy for implementation.

Another important difference is that while SOL is implements its reconciliation process on a grassroots level, the theories of both Lederach and Cox are first and foremost about initiatives and processes on the top- or middle level.⁵² The characteristics of a reconciliation processes would in general be applicable to all the levels, but the specific and practical initiatives might differ from one level to another.

A third difference is that the main theories referred to in this thesis often describe reconciliation as a comprehensive framework that depends upon a long term horizon and a multiple set of initiatives and actors/practitioners. In my field study I have on the other side tried to isolate one actor (SOL) and look at the impact this actor has had on the process. On one side this is a challenge for my research as it is hard to isolate the impact of one actor from the impact of other actors in a complex and integrated society. On the other side it is

⁵² In one of his theories, Lederach, divide the target society of reconciliation into three levels: Top level, middle level and grassroots level. He then goes on to describe the participants and the initiatives of reconciliation, applicable for each of the levels. (Lederach 2008, 39)

important to make this attempt in order to pinpoint the significant influence of one of the contributors to this process.

4.2.1 Theories of Reconciliation and SOL

According to both Lederach and Cox, the heart of reconciliation is the restoration of the broken relationships between antagonists. For this to happen, Lederach underlines the importance of creating opportunities for encounters between the former enemies (Lederach 2008, 24). According to my understanding of the situation within and around SOL the possibility for such encounters and relationships has been limited. The major reason for this is that both SOL and its neighborhood predominantly consists of Luos and Kisis which made up one of the sides of the post election violence. The other side mainly made up of Kikuyus, is very limited in numbers in these communities. Another reason is that SOL did not run any initiative in order to create the possibility for encounters.⁵³ Both neighboring congregations and neighborhoods have a big number of Kikuyu inhabitants. To create encounters and help restore relationships SOL could have ran different kinds of initiatives towards these communities. According to Lederach and Cox this would have benefitted the reconciliation process in a fundamental way. The lack of restored relationships can be seen as evidence that the reconciliation initiatives and process of SOL still have much room for improvement as it maybe lacks the essential outcome of reconciliation – restored relationships. The lack of encounters between the antagonists of the post election violence also limits the possibility of success of the other reconciling initiatives and characteristics of SOL. Encounters and restored relationships can provide fertile soil for the fight against ethnic stereotypes and tribalism and the building of common trust, perception and shared experiences (Lederach 2008, 30). The lack of encounters and restored relationships could thus be one of the explanations why ethnic stereotypes still exists between Kikuyus and other tribes in SOL. Another essential aspect of reconciliation according to my theoretical framework is that it both deals with the violent past and a common and interrelated future (Lederach 2008, 34). The question in then *does SOL deal with the past and the future?* In a way it does, in another way it does not. As already mentioned SOL does have a multitude of characteristics and

⁵³ The one initiative that SOL run for creating possibilities for encounters was the start of the volleyball team. This was however mostly used by youth from the community and not from the congregation.

initiatives that deal with the healing and comforting of emotional wounds. Congregating for services, sharing, transcendent intervention and compassion are some of the initiatives and characteristics that my informants have mentioned. Though this is a way of dealing with the future, these initiatives do have a weakness according to the reconciliation theories of Lederach. He calls for a thorough process that gives room and opportunity for both the victims and the offenders to share their experiences, emotions, traumas and losses. The acknowledgement that can be experienced in such a process is an essential first step toward the restoration of the person and the relationship (Lederach 2008, 26). The room and opportunity for this has been random and limited in the reconciliation process in SOL. This is probably limiting the process of reconciliation in SOL and could be seen as one of the reasons why stereotypes and tribalism still exist within the congregation.

As far as I understand through the interviews with my informants, the initiatives dealing with the creation of a common and interdependent future have also been limited. No specific initiatives were taken by SOL with the aim or the result of creating a common future between former antagonists. Some of the initiatives and characteristics of SOL can however be seen as having this as an indirect outcome. The very nature of a congregation, a place where people of all tribes are welcomed and treated the same, can be seen as a trait that envisions a common and interdependent future for the members of the church. Such a trait is both building interethnic relationships and a belief in a common future. However, as I have said before the possibility of interethnic interaction between the antagonists of the post election violence, is limited in SOL as the Kikuyus are few. Because of this the possibility for envisioning a common and interdependent future might therefore be limited within the framework of SOL.

In a bigger picture we can say that the gospel itself can be viewed as an instrument to envision such a future. The teaching of SOL, as far as I found it, contains values of equality and love that are both applicable for this life and the hereafter. If such messages are pinpointed and speak about tribalism and ethnic reconciliation they can be seen as initiatives that serve in uniting people and envisioning a common future. In relationship to the theories of Lederach there are however a lack of pinpointed and strategically implemented initiatives that, through common activities and projects, can glue former enemies together by creating common interest for a peaceful future.

One of the main aspects of Lederach's theory of reconciliation is his understanding of reconciliation as the meeting point between truth, mercy, justice and peace. According to Lederach reconciliation is the point where you will find the balance between the conflicting

energies of the four mentioned values. The enhancement of one or some of these values over others will normally lead to an unbalanced or limited reconciliation. As far as I was told by my informants, SOL focused on mercy and peace at the expense of truth and justice. The preaching of, and focus on love and forgiveness highlighted the values of mercy and peace, but few initiatives were aimed at bringing truth and justice after the post election violence. One of my informants was even calling for initiatives that could help her claim her right to what she lost during the post election violence. Another (Informant 5) was asking for ICC to prosecute the ones responsible for the violence that happened two years ago. It is of course not the responsibility of SOL to make sure that criminals are prosecuted and settlements are made between victims and offenders. This is the job of public institutions and actors, but in the case of Kenya and especially Kibera, this has not taken place in a sufficient way. SOL might not be to blame for the lack of justice after the post election violence, but according to Lederach the reconciliation process is out of balance. When it comes to the value of truth, SOL could have run more initiatives in order to create forums where victims of the violence could have told their stories and through this experienced recognition of what they have been through. This could have served as a healing initiative and at the same it would have balanced out the teaching of love and forgiveness.

An aspect of reconciliation that I found in SOL, that is either neglected or shallowly explored through the theories of this thesis is the belief in transcendent intervention. In SOL I found testimonies of unexplainable incidents that were interpreted as the result of transcendent intervention. According to my informants these incidents, and the belief in them, then had a comforting and healing affect on their traumas and emotional wounds. This is not a theological thesis, so I will not try to determine whether these incidents actually were transcendent intervention or just random happenings. For the content of this thesis that is actually not important. The importance for the reconciliation process is that the people affected by these incidents actually believed they were transcendent interventions. As I already mentioned this dimension of reconciliation is rarely discussed in the theories. One of the few traces I found is when Cox is discussing the importance of forgiveness. He recognizes that faith-based reconciliation, unlike secular reconciliation, often require “a supernatural intervention in the heart of the victim” (Cox 2007, 77). The other trace of this is found in Johnson and Sampsons book *Religion the Missing Dimension in Statecraft*. In their discussion of the assets that the church holds as peacemakers they do recognize the spiritual and practical power of prayer. (Johnson and Sampson 1994, 261)

These two examples do recognize the possibility of transcendent intervention and the importance of the belief in this as a part of a faith-based reconciliation process. Though the examples are slightly different from the examples of SOL, they all speak of the same essence: The belief that God cares and can intervene directly in the lives of people. They also highlight that the belief in this intervention does have a reconciling effect on the people involved.

It is however important to mention the limits and dangers of such believes. Throughout history acclaimed divine revelation and intervention has led to the opposite of reconciliation; more hate, tribalism and violence. It is enough to mention the medieval crusades, Islamist terrorism and Josef Kony's LRA in Uganda. They are all in some way or another motivated by the belief in a direct divine intervention or revelation and they have all caused terror, traumas and violence. It is therefore essential to underline that in order to have a reconciling affect the belief in transcendent intervention must be accompanied by theology and teaching of love and equality. This seems to be the case in SOL.

Since the theories I refer to in this thesis do not talk much about the affect that belief in transcendent intervention has on reconciliation, they do neither talk about the need for a link between these believes and a theology of love, peace, forgiveness and equality. All the theories of faith-based reconciliation do however talk a lot about the essentialness of finding and teaching such values that can be found in all of the world's major religions.

4.2.2 Theories of the Assets of the Church and the Situation in SOL

In chapter two I discussed some characteristics of churches, in general, that various theories described as assets in the building of sustainable peace and reconciliation. One of these assets is that churches are often part of strong local, national and international networks. The international links of the churches often give them access to financial and professional support. It can also be an asset in the process of advocacy. The national and local links gives churches access to different social levels and geographically diverse groups. This way churches often have the ability to reach wide, deep and far. So how does this asset apply to the case of SOL? The pastor, the elder and the deacon told me that they had received funding from contacts abroad that helped them carry out the social work and to rebuild the school, medical clinic and church building. The elder also told me that international visitors to SOL and to its members were received as comforting incidents. SOL is also a good example of how church affiliations have contact points in many different local communities. For ELCK,

SOL can be seen as an instrument for bringing reconciliation to the neighborhood of Gatwekera, Kibera.

According to Johnson and Sampson the credibility and moral authority of churches in general can be an asset for reconciliation. Churches are often regarded as the voice of truth and righteousness and are therefore listened to when they orchestrate initiatives for peace and reconciliation. In Kenya this was not the case during the post election violence. During the time that led up to the presidential election many churches and church leaders corrupted and destroyed their position as they became part of the tribalism that characterized the presidential campaigns and ultimately led to the post election violence. By doing this, the churches, in general, lost their positions as keepers of moral authority and consequently also the ability to serve as an instrument of unity, healing and peace. In the case of SOL the picture also has more positive facets as the church and its leadership never became a part of the tribalism that characterized the campaigns and the following violence. I was also told that the fact the pastor is a foreigner and therefore not belonging to any of the sides of the conflict, helped SOL to be perceived as a more neutral congregation than many of the other congregations. SOL's social work aims at treating everyone the same regardless of their tribe has probably given them a position of high credibility and moral authority.

Teaching and practicing of moral values are, according Ntakarutimana, also seen as an asset for peacebuilding. As I already discussed, this gives the churches a position of credibility and respect. In addition to this, the teaching of moral values also gives a good foundation for peace and reconciliation, if it is believed and practiced by the listeners – the church members. According to my informants, this teaching of moral values may be one of the most important assets of SOL to the process of reconciliation. When it came to their personal process of reconciliation many of them underlined the importance of the pastors teaching about love, equality and forgiveness.

Some theories give special value to the doctrine and practice of confession and repentance that is taught in many churches. According to Johnson and Sampson this teaching and practice gives an advantage, in the process of reconciliation, to the church and its members as they already are familiar with confession and repentance. To a certain degree I can also find evidence that this has played a role in the reconciliation process in SOL. Since most of my informants could be characterized as victims and not offenders during the post election violence, the concept of confession and repentance has not been that significant within SOL. There are however dimensions of this that are worth mentioning. One example of repentance

from SOL is the youth that felt compelled to confess and repent taking part in the burning and looting of SOL after seeing the social engagement of the congregation. Another example is the collective repentance that one of the Kikuyus felt was offered to them from Luos in SOL. While these Luos never took part in violence and looting affecting this Kikuyu, they still repented on behalf of their own tribe. This was perceived as an important step in the personal reconciliation process of this Kikuyu.

4.2.3 The theories of faith-based reconciliation and SOL

One of the basic foundations of faith-based reconciliation is that it recognizes the specific role that religion can play in the process of reconciliation. In addition to the emotional-, mental- and physical level, faith-based reconciliation also addresses the spiritual level of the process. “Reconciliation is a journey of the soul, a spirituality that involves intense inner struggle as well as social engagement” (Cox 2007, 104).

This change of heart, as the inner struggle refers to, is also something that is recognized by SOL. The pastor speaks of men’s reconciliation to God as the aim of the service. He then believes that these people, as a result of the reconciliation with God, will change and, step by step, start to love their neighbors. This can also be described as an inner struggle or a change of heart as Cox describes it.

Another fundament in the theory of faith-based reconciliation that is drawn up by Cox is the teaching of and belief in the sacred texts – especially those found in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Cox claims that these texts are full of rich teaching of the principles and values needed for a true reconciliation. The teaching of the sacred texts, in this case the Bible, is also a fundament in the services in SOL. According to the pastor the whole liturgy, which determines the content of the services, is Christ focused, and many of the invocations are direct quotes from the Bible. What separates the focus of SOL from the theory of Cox, is that SOL is teaching and focusing on the Bible in general during its work for reconciliation, while Cox is referring to specific messages that talks about principles and values of reconciliation. Cox’s theory can therefore be said to be more pinpointed in its use of sacred texts in the work of reconciliation than the services of SOL are.

The faith-based theory of Cox also refers to eight core values that he believes to be central in the teaching of the sacred texts of the Abrahamic tradition. These values are pluralism, inclusion, peacemaking, social justice, forgiveness, healing wounds, sovereignty, and

atonement. In some ways I also found these values emphasized in the reconciliation process in SOL. It is however a long way from the thorough theology and teaching that makes up Cox's theory of faith-based reconciliation, to the more random use of the same values in the daily life of SOL.

I will not comment on all of the eight values presented by Cox, but I need to compare the way some of them are described by Cox and the way the same values are practiced in SOL.

The first value Cox describes is *pluralism*. To Cox this does not only stand for the acknowledgement and acceptance of differences between humans and cultures. He takes it one step further as he describes pluralism as a source of thanksgiving and appreciation. Pluralism is something that God desired and that shows his immense power of creation and creativity. In the case of SOL I have heard many examples on how the message of equality, that has been taught, has helped church members to a new perception of people from other tribes. I have however not heard anyone talking about bringing this message of equality to the next level, where the differences between the tribes becomes a source of thanksgiving and appreciation. Taking the value of pluralism to the level of thanksgiving could, according to Cox, have benefited the reconciliation process of SOL.

The next value I want to comment on is the *healing of wounds*. According to Cox this is a four step process containing acknowledgement, grieving, trauma therapy and restorative justice. The implementation of this value is essential for the personal healing of people suffering from traumas. It is also fundamental in order to avoid development and creation of more hate, stereotypes and violence. So how has this process been dealt with in SOL? The church did serve as a center of comfort during and after the violence. According to the elder people would gather both for the official services and also in more informal ways at the church compound. Here they would share their experiences and comfort each other.

According to my informants this helped people in the process of healing. This happened however only in an informal and unstructured way. It is a good chance that this process of healing could have reached both wider and deeper if it had been implemented in strategic and planned way that made sure as many victims as possible got the chance to share their experiences, feel acknowledged and get the chance to grieve. The two last steps of Cox's definition of healing of wounds; trauma healing and restorative justice, has received little focus in SOL. According to Cox this could limit the possibility for a thorough healing of wounds.

The last two values of faith-based reconciliation described by Cox are sovereignty and atonement and they deal with the relationship between God and man. While sovereignty deals with the submission of man's own mind and desire to the will of God, atonement stands for the restoration of a personal relationship with God. Both of these dimensions are important and fundamental in the reconciliation process of SOL. The pastor speaks about reconciliation between God and men as the only way to also get true and stable reconciliation between men. This reconciliation is according to the pastor found in the service and its Christ-based liturgy. Cox speaks about reconciliation with God as a foundation for experiencing a change of heart. Using almost the same words the pastor speaks about reconciliation with God as a creator of love between men, and an enhancer of stable reconciliation.

4.3 How to Use the New Knowledge of this Thesis?

I have divided this subchapter into two parts. In the first part I will look at the impact the knowledge of this thesis can have on the work of secular practitioners of reconciliation. In the second part I will look at influence my finding can have on the work of religious practitioners of reconciliation.

4.3.1 Secular Practitioners of Reconciliation

The first and most important thing secular practitioners of reconciliation can learn from the content of this thesis is to be aware of the vital role that faith and religion can play in the reconciliation process. In many cultures and post conflict settings faith, the spiritual realm and religion play an important role. Being aware of these dimensions and the impact they have on the worldview, decisions and values of individuals, faith groups and institutions is an important asset that every actor of peace and reconciliation should acquire.

It is however not enough to be aware of the spiritual dimensions of the setting were we are supposed to make a difference. Secular actors of reconciliation should also acquire knowledge of the beliefs, religions and spiritual realm of the people they are working with. By doing this and at the same time acting in a respectful way they can earn the trust and confidence of the local people. Through knowledge of local custom and beliefs secular actors can, in dialogue with the local leadership, take advantage of religious rituals and rites. Used in the right way, such rituals can serve as an important part of any reconciliation process.

Another asset that can be vital in a reconciliation process is the use of religious teaching and texts. Such texts, especially if they hold a position of moral authority and high credibility, can be of immense importance. Knowledge and use of these texts and moral teaching, and especially the parts that talk about peace, love and equality, can be used as a solid foundation for a further process of reconciliation.

Both the theories of faith-based reconciliation and the practice of SOL underline the importance of reconciling men to God as a vital foundation for reconciliation between men. This aspect should be recognized by secular actors of reconciliation. It would however need further research to find the right way for secular actors to take advantage of this. Two dimensions of this should however be reflected on. The first reflections should be used to acquire an understanding of the value that a submission to, and a relation to a higher being/authority would mean to the possibility of reconciling men to men. The second reflection should be used when trying to understand the importance that reconciliation to a higher being/authority has in the worldview of the local people. Respect for, understanding of and implementation according to local beliefs and culture is an important aspect of every step of a reconciliation process.

This master thesis also suggests that incidents of believed transcendent intervention can play a role in the reconciliation process. Secular actors might not share the belief that these incidents are actually the result of a divine intervention, but they need to approach such incidents and believes in a respectful way. Whether the incidents are actually divine interventions or just coincidences is impossible to determine in a scientific way, but the good news is that this distinction is not important for a practitioner of reconciliation to make. The most important question to ask is whether it has a positive effect on the process of reconciliation or not. According to my study they can have such an effect and practitioners of reconciliation need to acknowledge this in a respectful way.

Secular actors should however also remember that they are in possession of tools and initiatives that can complement, enhance and sometimes correct beliefs and tools held by local and religious groups. If this can be communicated and implemented in a respectful and dialogue based way, the two approaches, the religious and the secular, can create a synergy effect that strengthens the process of reconciliation.

4.3.2 Religious Practitioners/Faith Communities of Reconciliation

I hope this whole thesis contains aspects of reconciliations that would be important for faith-based actors of reconciliation. I will however try to underline some specific issues that can give more understanding of how to promote the whole process of reconciliation as well as specific initiatives.

One of the most vital lessons to learn from this thesis is for religious actors of reconciliation to keep their path clean and never become a part of an identity conflict. It should always make an effort to ensure that they keep their position as institutions of moral authority and credibility. If they corrupt this position and pick side in identity conflicts, they will lose their ability to play a role as a peace builder and reconciler. Their position of moral authority in other areas of life will also deteriorate. This does however not mean that churches or other faith-based actors should not take a stand and speak up in issues of social injustice or ethnic inequality. On the contrary they should have an active prophetic role in the society where they are serving. The actors must merely make sure that it is the injustice and inequality and not the tribe or ethnic group that exercises it they attack or criticize. The failure to address inequality and injustice will actually have the potential of having the same negative effect on the credibility and moral authority of a church as taking side in an ethnic conflict. Churches must therefore make sure that they never corrupt their credibility by, ensuring that they do not take sides and do not remain silent.

Another danger for religious communities and actors of reconciliation is the possibility that they replace tribalism with “religionism”⁵⁴ in the process of using religion as a tool of reconciliation. This can happen if a person’s highest loyalty and source of identity, in the process of ethnic reconciliation, changes from ethnic affiliation to religious affiliation. This change must therefore be accompanied by the teaching and understanding that human equality also applies when it comes to religious differences.

Religious actors of faith should be aware that teaching of morals and values, based on sacred texts, can have a positive effect on a reconciliation process, but they must also acknowledge that this teaching and the religious practice and rituals that accompany it, are not sufficient by

⁵⁴ *Religionism* is a self made word. In lack of better terms and as a counterpart to tribalism, this word describes the dangerous attitude of superiority that people hold of their own religious group in comparison to people of other religious groups. This attitude gives fertile soil to religious stereotyping, hate and hostility between groups of different religious identity.

themselves. A faith-based approach to reconciliation also requires other and more secular/professional initiatives to make sure that the process has a better chance of success. It is important to underline this aspect, as religious leaders sometimes have a tendency to put too much emphasis on religious tools and initiatives at the expense of scientific and secular tools and initiatives.

Many churches, at least in Kenya, are dominated by one tribe and the possibility of interethnic interaction is therefore limited. This needs to be acknowledged as a limitation for a reconciliation process in such churches. Interaction and restoration of relationships between antagonists is both a mean and a goal of reconciliation, but this can only happen in a limited way within churches that merely consist of people of one ethnic group. In order to be an efficient tool of reconciliation the churches must actively strive to create common grounds where interethnic interaction and restoration of broken relationships can take place.

The last lesson of this thesis that I believe is important for faith-based practitioners of reconciliation to learn, is that an effective and sustainable reconciliation process requires a strategic approach and initiatives that are pinpointed at targeting the diverse and unique needs of each post conflict setting. A church can have a reconciling effect by just living and preaching the message of love, forgiveness and equality, but the reconciliation process will be more effective and sustainable if it also takes time to determine the needs of the situation and approach them with pinpointed initiatives.

4.4 Conclusion

SOL did make a difference! The little church in the slum of Kibera, did not have a plan or a strategy in order to fight the tribalism that, through the post election violence, caused so much harm to the congregation, Kibera and Kenya. Neither did it run many initiatives specifically to promote reconciliation between antagonists or healing for the victims of the violence and rioting. Still it made an important difference in the process of reconciliation that took place in the lives of the members of the church, and to a certain degree also to the inhabitants – and the atmosphere of its neighborhood.

Both the testimonies of my informants and my own observations and casual chatting with people in the neighborhood of SOL indicate that tribalism is stronger and reconciliation less advanced outside the congregation than within. My interviews also show that my informants are less tribal today than in the period just after the post election violence. It is hard to

determine the causality of this, but according to my informants the work and influence of SOL has affected them in a reconciling way. In my work with this thesis I have found some indicators that can prove this. First of all, I found less inter-ethnic hate between the members in SOL than between people of different tribes outside SOL. The members of SOL also claimed to understand and practice the concept of forgiveness. Through my interviews with church members I also found a high awareness of the concept of equality between the people of different tribes. In addition to this I could not find any trace of inter-ethnic violence caused by any of the members of SOL. Lastly I also found that, though it was limited, the church initiated interethnic activities, where antagonists from the post election violence could meet.

The positive and reconciling effects that I have referred to did however, not happen as a result of pinpointed reconciliation initiatives but more as a result of the daily work and existence of SOL. There is no doubt that the weekly services where people of different tribes gather together to listen to the teachings of love, forgiveness and equality contributed towards the reconciliation process. The compassion and material help that SOL offered during and after the post election violence did also play a role in the bigger comprehensive framework of reconciliation. Also the practical example of treating people equally regardless of their tribe, shown by the pastor and the church as an institution, has had a reconciling influence. Lastly I want to underscore the role played by the belief in transcendent intervention and the incidents that were interpreted as such. These served as comforting events that according to the church members showed proof of divine presence in the middle of the turmoil.

The positive description of the reconciling effect of SOL is however just half the truth. Unfortunately, there are still many traces of tribalism and wounds, manifested through ethnic stereotyping, a sense of lack of justice and desire for revenge. Part of the explanation for the limited effect of the reconciliation process can be maybe be found in the very nature of reconciliation. It is a process that demands a long term horizon and a comprehensive and diverse approach. The process of reconciliation in and around SOL thus needs a long-term commitment and new and complementing initiatives to advance further. The biggest weakness with the process of reconciliation in SOL so far seems to be the lack of pinpointed initiatives taken in order to promote different aspects of reconciliation. The second big disadvantage of the reconciliation process in SOL is the lack of arenas for interethnic interaction between Kikuyus and people of other tribes. With most of the Kikuyus gone from both SOL and Gatwekera the possibility for such interaction has been limited. The last weakness of the reconciliation process is the unbalanced belief in the spiritual work of the

church, emphasizing the liturgy of the weekly service, as the only, or at least the most important, tool of reconciliation. This contrast with the theory of faith-based reconciliation which emphasizes the balance between tools of religion and faith and the tools of more secular skills such as trauma counseling, conflict resolution and truth commissions. By using these last skills and tools, the reconciliation process in SOL could have reached further, wider and deeper.

It seems like SOL has been able to lay a good foundation for a further process of reconciliation. The values, practice and the teaching of the church can be a solid groundwork for a continuous process that should give room for strategic, professional and pinpointed initiatives that especially need to focus on trauma counseling and inter-ethnic interaction. In the very end of this thesis it is also important to underline the need for the reconciliation process in SOL to be a part of a bigger and national framework of reconciliation. National initiatives and initiatives taken by other local actors can both serve as complementing and balancing initiatives. Both sorts of initiatives would help the reconciliation of SOL to grow from an incomplete process with a good foundation into a sustainable and lasting state of peace and reconciliation.

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