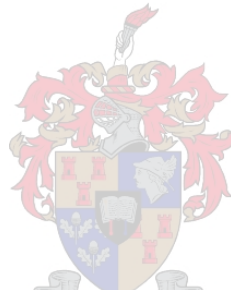PREACHING RECONCILIATION: A STUDY OF THE NARRATIVES IN GENESIS 37-50

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MARCH 2017

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a practical theology endeavour that evaluates the narrative preaching of Genesis 37-50 as a means of promoting reconciliation and social cohesion in a situation of religious and ethnic conflict in a context of the employment or mobilisation of religion and ethnic identity to the exclusion, marginalisation and, according to some, dehumanisation of others. The region specifically referred to is that of the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria, where religious and ethnic differences between people are being used to advance inequality and to dominate others. The study critically examines how actions such as the traditional African concept of ethnicity, the traditional African concept of land ownership and boundaries, manipulation by the elites of ethnicity and religion, religion fanaticism, and poverty and unemployment fuel ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence. In addition, the study examines how these phenomena may be engaged with through the technique of using narratives to create points of identification, narratives as imageries to shape imagination, and narratives as sermon illustrations.

As such, the research argues that the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, found in Genesis 37-50, may be used to create a point of identification in preaching reconciliation and social cohesion, because the story depicts defamation of character, egocentrism, favouritism, dehumanisation, and pain and trauma as elements that fuel divisions, conflicts and violence. Furthermore, the study also considers the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as imageries for shaping imagination in preaching reconciliation, because the story pictures changes of thought, changes in actions, forgiveness devoid of confession of evil done in the past, and building a common future as bases for coming together, staying together and walking together as ingredients of reconciliation. Therefore, the study proposes prophetic preaching, biographical preaching, pastoral preaching and economic preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as techniques for preaching reconciliation and social cohesion.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis behels 'n poging in praktiese teologie om die narratiewe prediking van Genesis 37-50 te evalueer om sodoende versoening en maatskaplike samehorigheid te bevorder in 'n situasie waar daar godsdienstige en etniese konflik is in 'n konteks van die gebruik of mobilisering van godsdienstige en etniese identiteit tot die uitsluiting, marginalisering en, volgens sommige, die verontmensliking van ander. Die streek waarna daar spesifiek verwys word, is die Middel-Belt Streek van Nigerië, waar godsdienstige en etniese verskille tussen mense gebruik word om ongelykheid te bevorder en ander te domineer. Die studie ondersoek krities hoe aksies soos die tradisionele Afrika-konsep van grondbesit en grense, die manipulering van etnisiteit en godsdiens deur die elite, godsdienstige fanatisme, en armoede en werkloosheid etniese en godsdienstige skeiding, konflik en geweld aanstook. Daarbenewens ondersoek die studie ook hoe daar met hierdie verskynsels betrokke geraak kan word deur die gebruik van verhale om punte van identifikasie te skep, die gebruik van verhale as beelde om die verbeelding te vorm en verhale as illustrasies in preke.

As sulks argumenteer hierdie navorsing dat die verhaal van Josef en sy broers, soos in Genesis 37-50, gebruik kan word om 'n identifikasiepunt te skep in die preek van versoening en maatskaplike samehorigheid omdat die storie naamskending, egosentrisme, begunstiging, ontmensliking en pyn en trauma gebruik as aspekte wat skeiding, konflik en geweld aanstook. Verder oorweeg die studie ook die gebruik van die verhaal van Josef en sy broers as beelde om die verbeelding te vorm in die prediking van versoening, omdat die storie beelde verskaf van verandering in die denke, verandering in aksie, vergifnis sonder belydenis van kwaad wat in die verlede gedoen is, en die bou van 'n gedeelde toekoms as basisse vir die saamkom, saambly en saamstap as bestanddele van versoening. Die studie stel dus profetiese prediking, biografiese prediking, pastorale prediking en ekonomiese prediking van die verhaal van Josef en sy broers voor as tegnieke vir die prediking van versoening en maatskaplike samehorigheid.

DEDICATION

With gratitude, I dedicate this dissertation to God Almighty, who created me in his image, gave me salvation, and the wisdom to put this dissertation together; to my mother, Ladi Daniel, and my wife, Rahilah Nicodemus, whose effort, patience, sacrifice, prayers and tears became the seed of my success.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Studies on church history reveal that there has occurred within the present century a demographic shift in the centre of gravity of the Christian world. This is a shift of Christianity from the West (Europe and North America) to the South, and to Africa in particular. Andrew Walls, the foremost living historian of Christianity, has noted, "We have to regard African Christianity as potentially the representative Christianity of the twenty-first century". While Northern Atlantic dominated global Christianity in previous centuries, "the Christianity typical of the twenty-first century will be shaped by the events and processes that take place in the Southern continents, and above all by those that take place in Africa (Walls 2002:85; Effa 2013:214). In addition, a renowned African Church historian, Lamin Sanneh (2003:14), observed that, "[b]y 2002 Christian expansion continued to gather momentum, and churches in Africa and

Asia, for example, were bursting at the seams with an uninterrupted influx of new members". Elsewhere, Sanneh (2005:4) notes that "Christianity has not ceased to be a Western religion, but its future as a world religion is now being decided and shaped by the hands and in minds of its non-Western adherents, who share little of the West's cultural assumptions". He further argues that it is no longer fanciful today to speak of, say, an African pope, with all that that means for the cultural repositioning of the church. Yet barely a generation ago, such a prospect was unimaginable.

There is no denying the fact that Christianity in Africa is increasingly vibrant and, as the populations of the countries keep growing, the churches proportionately take their fair share of this growth. Lee is correct in saying that the number of African Christians is growing at over 2% annually. This is because, in 1900, Africa had 10 million Christians, representing about 10% of the population. In 2000, the figure had grown to 360 million, representing about 45% of the

population. In 2010, Christians in Africa were estimated to be about 518 million, translating into about 63% of the continent's total population of approximately 823 million. Based on the present trends, it is estimated that the Christian following in Africa will surpass a billion by 2050, and that Christianity will be chiefly the religion of Africa and the African diaspora, as once it was in the West (Lee 2011:3; Galgalo 2015:1).

Nigeria perhaps provides the most visible proof of Andrew Walls's and Lamin Sanneh's attestation of the growth of Christianity in Africa. This is because, over the past several centuries, missionary outreach efforts of nearly every major Christian denomination found fertile soil in Nigeria. Roman Catholics began to establish outposts in the late fifteenth century and, by 2009, numbered more than 23 million baptised members in nine archbishoprics. Subsequent outreach by Baptist, SIM, Lutheran and Christian Reformed missions gave birth to denominations with adherents numbering in millions today. For example, the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), a denomination spawned by the work of SIM International, counts some six million members in Nigeria. Nigeria's 2.1 million Baptists constitute the third largest Baptist fellowship in the world, surpassed only by the number of Baptists in India and in the United States. More Baptist worshipers are found in Nigeria on any given Sunday than in Europe and South America combined.

The strength of mainline Nigerian Christianity has been most evident in the Anglican Communion. It is fair to say that the very heart of the Anglican community has been transplanted to Africa. The Church of Nigeria alone, numbering about 19 million, accounts for 25% of all Anglicans in the world. The Church of Nigeria's average church attendance is greater than that of the combined Church of England, Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA), and Anglican Church of Canada (Effa 2013: 214). The RCCG (Redeemed Christian Church of God) is described as the fastest-growing Christian movement in the world. Within Nigeria itself, there are at least 2 000 parishes of the RCCG, with around five million adherents. Holy Ghost Services held on the first Friday of every month at Redemption Camp, forty-five kilometres northeast of Lagos, draw between 800 000 and 1.2 million worshipers. Currently there are congregations in ninety countries, including China and Pakistan. Over 100 000 members are reported within London and the English Midlands. Some of the larger RCCG churches in England and North

America are known as the House of Praise Network. The denomination claims 600 churches in the United States and Canada (Effa 2013:16).

As Christianity is making headway in Africa, Maigadi (2006:1-2) observes that "ethnic affiliation is increasingly becoming an obstacle to the unity and spiritual growth of the church in Africa and world at large. Ethnic affiliation is now threatening the life of the church whereby Christians are defined not by biblical standards but by 'blood relationships'". For example, Mwaura noted that the crisis in Rwanda was ethnic in its manifestation, and the role of the Church in the magnitude of ethnic animosity is what characterises the Church in some parts of Africa. The 1994 Rwandan genocide shook the Christian Church to its foundations. This is because not only were members of every denomination in Rwanda responsible for the most appalling of atrocities, but most significantly, many of these massacres took place in the buildings where many of the targets of the genocide sought sanctuary. Mwaura further argues that the Church was pathologically overwhelmed by a message of hatred and death, thus facilitating ethnic genocide. She asserts that "... but for the army and the church, the two prime movers, the two organizing and leading forces, one located in the state and the other in the society, there would have been no Genocide" (Mwaura 2009:25).

In Kenya, Mwaura observed that the Church faces the challenge of credibility after failing to provide moral leadership when the country was faced with voting in a referendum on the draft constitution in 2005 and the general elections in December 2007. Church leadership in all churches in Kenya was polarised along party/ethnic lines. Few clergy stood out as neutral and, in any case, neutrality was not entertained by adherents. The consequence of this was splintering of congregations in urban areas where they were multi-ethnic, and violence meted out on perceived enemies or outsiders in certain parts of the country. Just as in Rwanda, church buildings and those who sought refuge there also did not escape the violence and wanton destruction. Professed followers of the Prince of Peace, whose law is love, Christians turned on their neighbours with demonic barbarity. They killed, maimed, looted, and raped, torched and evicted. They fuelled hate through telephone and email messages and laughed at their ethnicity. They became agents of evil. During the post-election violence, Kenyans sought refuge in church buildings imagining them to be safe havens. To their surprise, however, their lives were threatened by those who considered them aliens in that part of the country. For example, 17 people were set ablaze in the

Kiambaa Kenya Assemblies of God Church in Eldoret in the Rift Valley Province (Mwaura 2009:25-26).

In Nigeria, Maigadi made a case study of divisive ethnicity in Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), one of the largest church denominations in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Through the study, he discovered that the election of leaders in ECWA at all the levels of its administrative structures was characterised by nepotism, and ethnic and regional bias or sentiments (Maigadi 2006:8-10). In addition, Maigadi discovered that divisive ethnicity manifested itself in ECWA in the areas of employment and the creation of administrative units. It is difficult for pastors in ECWA to be employed in districts other than the one that is predominantly comprised of their ethnic group. It is also not uncommon to hear some Christians in ECWA being labelled as "strangers" by other Christians simply because they do not belong to the predominant ethnic group in a given district (Maigadi 2006:11-13). The fact that some Christians are being labelled as "strangers" in some churches denotes that ethnicity is a serious threat to Christianity and nation building in Nigeria and Africa.

The Middle Belt region is a graphic example of how ethnicity is a serious threat to the growth of Christianity and nation building in Africa. This is because it is an area that is predominantly Christian, yet ethnic and tribal differences are mobilised to marginalise, discriminate against and exclude others. For this reason, Alubo (2011:11-12), asserts that today there is no state in the Middle Belt region that has not experienced a number of violent conflicts in the last three years. He argues further that the Middle Belt harbours more battlefront and invariably undeclared civil war more than any region in Nigeria because it has the largest number of ethnic groups in the country. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that, at all levels of society, religious and ethnic differences are exploited in order to marginalise, exclude, segregate and demean others.

From the foregoing, it can be argued that ethnic and tribal divisions, conflicts and violence are bringing the growth of the church in Africa into disrepute, and this poses a serious question on what kind of preaching the church in Africa, Nigeria and Middle Belt region needs?

1.2   MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

In view of the above contextual background, the motivation for this study was driven by a number of factors. Firstly, the study was motivated by my family background of mixed religion. My father was a Muslim before becoming a Christian; two of my sisters are Muslims, one of whom has been the main sponsor of my theological studies and pastoral work. I have uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces who are Muslims. These people relate with me without religious bias or prejudice. "In other words, I and my Muslims relations relate freely, interact freely, we share joy and sorrow together. We visit one another, celebrate occasions like weddings, naming ceremony and graduations and attend burial together. Virtually most of my relations who are Muslims always call him their son who is a pastor." These experiences made the researcher to believe that it is possible for Christians and Muslims to live a harmonious life and still practise their religions. This means the researcher was motivated by the fact that the people of the Middle Belt region need to consider relationship based on shared humanity.

Secondly, the study is motivated by my observation of how innocent people lost their lives and many others were left in abject poverty as a result of persistent conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. The 2011 post-election violence is perhaps one of the greatest motivations for this research. This is because I was affected in one way or the other. For example, as a pastor I lost church members, and for months people in the communities where I pastored could not sleep properly at night; some could not sleep in their houses because of a fear of reprisal attacks. Until today there are guerrilla attacks that cause fear and anxiety in many rural areas in the Middle Belt region. In addition, the 2011 post-election violence affected my relations who are Muslims, and for months I had to provide shelter, clothes and food for them. This made me believe that there is no winner in a situation of conflict and violence – all are losers, and the damage, whether short or long term, affects all. Conflict and violence do not know who started it, who supports it and who is against it. Conflict and violence do not know ethnic, tribal and religious differences; they consume all. I am always moved when I see human beings created in the image of God suffering or losing their lives as a result of conflict and violence. As I undertook this research, I could not help but say, "I wish I had a power that is stronger than writing which could eliminate conflict and violence". That is power that may automatically make people understand that there is need to move on as a people from conflict to reconciliation

because we have loss many things and gain nothing in fighting one another. This means there is need to embark on steps and actions that will promote reconciliation and guarantee a better future for the next generation. That is there is need to think for the future generation and do that which will save them from going through the bitter and harsh experience we are going through (Email conversation with Zeinah, 29 October 2016).[1]

In addition, I am also motivated to conduct this research because of my experience as a pastor in local congregations of the ECWA Zonkwa District Church Council in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.[2] ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All) is an international church denomination and Zonkwa District Church Council is one of its district church councils, which is located at Southern Kaduna in the Middle Belt Region. I constantly witness how people use their ethnic or tribal differences to marginalise, discriminate against and exclude others.

As such, my own commitment to address this unfortunate state of affairs forms part of my conviction regarding the characteristics of the church and the context of the Middle Belt region. One of these, for instance, is that the church is an agent of reconciliation and a mediator of reconciliation in society by creating practical ways of enhancing reconciliation and social cohesion (De Gruchy 2002:80; Mwaura 2009:27). This means the church in Middle Belt must become active in reversing acrimonious religious and ethnic relationships and should promote human reconciliation (Wall 1987:122). This is a conviction shared, for example, by Cilliers (2012:503), who states that the church should help create a space for graceful neighbouring. Van der Merwe (2003) adds that the church can foster reconciliation by cross-religious, tribal and ethnic dialogue and community building. The church is very well placed to facilitate bringing people together in small ways to encounter one another, work together, and break down

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[1] Zeina M. Barakat is a Palestinian doctorate candidate at the University of Jena in Germany. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Bethlehem (2005) and a Master of Arts degree from Al-Quds University (2006). She taught at Al-Quds University and Istiqlal University in Jericho; author of a book titled (*Sexual Harassment)* (2010) and co-author of *Holocaust Human Agony: Is there a way out of violence?* (2012) both in Arabic. She works as coordinator and facilitator for a number of projects focusing on women empowerment and leadership.

[2] ECWA as a denomination has eighty district church councils and approximately six million members within and outside of Nigeria. More than half of the district church councils and the membership, including the denomination headquarters, are located in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. The denomination has the largest number of members in the region.

stereotypes and cultural barriers (Van der Merwe 2003). The methodology should involve study, earnest prayer, and action within the normative guidelines for Christian conduct set out in the scripture. As such, the church in the Middle Belt of Nigeria has a role to play in breaking the barriers, frontiers and inequality created by rancorous religion and ethnicity in the region.

Furthermore, I have a conviction that narratives may produce good sermons in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, because in African culture storytelling has been a way of passing on the traditions and beliefs of a particular society from one generation to the next. It has also been used as a means of passing on traditions and codes of behaviour, as well as maintaining social order. Because of the influence of stories on African people after the evening meal, the members of a family gather on a porch or around the campfire to tell and listen to stories. The stories shared range from traditional ones to biblical ones (Chima 1984: 62).

The assertion that some of the stories shared among African people include biblical stories is another motivation for the study. That is, the use of biblical stories among African people led me to develop an interest in doing research on how narratives, specifically the narrative of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50, may be a technique for preaching reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question is: With reference to the narrative in Genesis 37-50, what role, if any, could narrative preaching play in bringing reconciliation to a broken society like the Middle Belt region of Nigeria?" In order to achieve the aims of the study, the following secondary research questions were identified.

- What are some of the actions and inactions that fuel ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria?
- How can narrative preaching promote reconciliation in the Middle Belt region?
- What is the potential of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50 to further reconciliation in the Middle Belt region?
- What are some of the preaching techniques that can be used for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region?

1.4   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Broadly speaking, the research design to be followed in this study was a literature study, which is a form of "unobtrusive research". According to Babbie and Mouton (2009:375), "[u]nobtrusive refer to data gather by means that do not involve the direct acquisition of information from research subject". In addition, the study used narrative research method of practical theology. That is the study gathered information through careful study of setting and historical context in which people's story unfolds. This means study focus on gathering and telling of biblical stories, people's stories and human events (Osmer 2008:50-51).

Though the study is a practical theology endeavour but unobtrusive research was adopted because there was sufficient data on ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and on narrative preaching. In addition, the unobtrusive research method was used because a significant aspect of the study involved interpretations of a biblical text, specifically Genesis 37-50. Therefore, the major types of sources used were those that pertain to 1) the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, especially the actions and inaction that fuel ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence; 2) homiletics, and especially the issue of narrative preaching in the context of religious and ethnic violence, and 3) the text regarding Genesis 37-50, i.e. exegetical works (monographs, journal articles and commentaries) on the biblical text. This was the method followed with regard to issues of the philosophical and theological nature of reconciliation, the exegesis of the context of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and the nature of preaching.

With regard to the specific texts in the Book of Genesis, different approaches to biblical interpretations have been employed as methodological means to understand the text. This means the study employed a multidimensional approach to biblical hermeneutics. This approach was based on the conviction that no single approach is the ultimate or only legitimate one. Firstly, as Turner (1988:6) would say, the study read the narrative of Genesis 37-50 as a simple naive reader, trying to discern the plots, and assuming that the final form of the text, and this text alone, was the only legitimate source for the investigation. That is, it entailed reading the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as a first-time reader, and especially reflecting on the passage from the perspective of preaching.

In addition, the goal of the study was not biblical hermeneutics and textual exegesis as such. Therefore, existing interpretations of the text by biblical scholars were scrutinised to come to an understanding of how the text may be employed and how the theme of reconciliation may be dealt with in the context of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers' reconciliation as applied to the Nigerian context.

1.4.1 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The research made use of Osmer's (2008:4) fourfold understanding of the task of practical theology as a means to structure the study, namely:

1.4.1.1 *Descriptive-empirical task:* This means "attending to what is going on" in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria (Osmer 2008:34). To achieve this purpose, the study used academic materials available at the Stellenbosch University Library, other libraries within and outside South Africa, the Bible, Bible commentaries, the internet, magazines, articles, journals and newspapers, as well as any component that was suitable for the research.

1.4.1.2 *Interpretive task:* Talking about the interpretive task, Osmer (2008:82) asserts that the interpretive task seeks reasons for the occurrences that were observed in the descriptive task. Here the interpretive guide must identify the issues rooted within the episodes, situations and contexts observed that require the interplay of three key characteristics: thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation, and wise judgment. The key question now becomes, why is this going on? This research used theories of art and science to bring about the conceptual understanding of ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence, and their causes in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

1.4.1.3 *Nominative task:* Concerning the normative task, Osmer maintains that the normative task asks what ought to be going on? It seeks to discern God's will for present realities. For this it uses three methods, namely theological interpretation, ethical reflection, and good practice. The research used the aspect of the theological concept, which according to Osmer is to draw on theological concepts, and to interpret present events and realities (2008:139). Hendriks (2004:19) understands it as "[h]ermeneutical concern that does exegesis of both the Word and the world and discerns how the Word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world". This part then asked what the Bible says, specifically in Genesis 37-50, concerning the role of the church and

preaching from a theological perspective; therefore, the study examined reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in this text.

1.4.1.4 *Pragmatic task:* The pragmatic task means that the research gives practical suggestions for the method of preaching that will help to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the situation of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.

1.4.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In the Bible, reconciliation is conveyed by different words and meanings. As such the study was limited to examining reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50. In addition, as this research was specifically within the discipline of homiletics, biblical exegesis of the Genesis text will be referred to in detail, but exegesis was not the central undertaking of the research. For exegetical insights, secondary data, namely the work of biblical scholars, was employed.

Furthermore, the central undertaking of the research was the use of narrative preaching as a guide in the process of reconciliation, and not a theological exploration of reconciliation. As such, reconciliation in the study is limited to reconciliation depicted in Genesis 37-50. What is more, the study was situated within and limited to a specific context, namely the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

Finally, although the study is about preaching reconciliation in a situation of ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence, it is limited to the framework of Christian preaching on reconciliation. This means the Christian faith inspired the guide for reconciliation proposed by the study; that is, the reconciliation proposed by the study is rooted in conviction and belief in the character, actions and commands of God manifested through the text of the Bible. Moreover, as Volf (2015) would say, the most successful large-scale reconciliation efforts in the twentieth century have been inspired by religion. For example, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was shaped by the Christian faith. Major nonviolent political movements at whose heart was the idea of reconciliation, such as Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for India's independence and Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights movement were inspired by Jainism, Hinduism and Christianity (Volf 2015:183).

1.5   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

For the purpose of clarification, some key terms as used in the context of this study have been defined. These terms include the following: divisions, conflict, violence, reconciliation, social cohesion, preaching, and narrative preaching.

1.5.1 DIVISIONS

According to Osaghae (2001:16), "[t]he term divided society is often used to refer to a society in which ethnic, racial, regional and allied cleavages are so fundamental that most political relations, especially involving competition for power and scarce resources, hinge on these differences". This means divisions involve one group of people discriminating against another on the basis of ethnic, religious, regional and other differences that could lead to the dehumanising of another group (Maigadi 2006:23). In other words, divisions involve the employment and/or mobilisation of ethnic, religious, regional and racial identity or difference to gain an advantage in a situation of competition or conflict (Osaghae 2003). Elsewhere, Osaghae (2001:17) observed that extreme examples of deeply divided societies are countries like South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria and Sudan. This is because, in these countries, the fundamentality of ethnic, racial and regional cleavages underlies various separatist agitations and perennial violent conflicts, which render issues of nationality deeply divisive and threaten the very survival of the state. This study concurs with Osaghae's observation that Nigeria is among the deeply divided societies in Africa. Moreover, one could argue that divisions are more pronounced in the Middle Belt region than in any region of Nigeria. This is because the region has the highest concentration of diverse ethnic groups, tribes, cultures and religions and is characterised by religious differences, cultural prejudice, kinship and political discrimination. People from different ethnic and religious groups employ their differences in pursuing a competing interest. Stated differently, the Middle Belt region is full of non-assimilating ethnic and religious groups that tend to promote goals of a religious, cultural and regional autonomy. This has created an environment of ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence (Adamu & Ben 2015:6).

1.5.2 CONFLICT

According to Putnam (2006:5), conflict centres on incompatibilities, an expressed struggle and interdependence among two or more parties. This denotes that conflict as incompatibility means

mutually exclusive or diametrically opposed goals, values or beliefs. In addition, conflict means a situation where the objectives of any individual or group perceive reality in a manner that is opposed to that of other individual or group (Neal 1982:67). The focus of this study, however, is community conflict. That is a situation in which the relationships in a society are characterised by "us-versus-them" scenarios because the parties involved lack intimacy. Violence becomes more justifiable in such relationships, because the "other", who is less than the "us", is perhaps less human and someone whom the "us" are not dependent on. The dilemma, however, is that the "us" live and work near "them" or the "other", which makes conflict become an everyday activity (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey 2006:391).

1.5.3 VIOLENCE

On the one hand, the study considered the meaning of violence based on Agang's (2010:28) definition of violence, as an outburst of anger against something or someone's values. This means violence is an eruption of anger against something that a person protects from being devalued or demeaned. On the other hand, there is also structural violence, defined by Huber (2010:2) as all structural conditions that prevent people from developing and using their capabilities. Huber further argues that the segregation of ethnic groups in the United States of America before the success of the Civil Rights Movement, or the system of Apartheid in South Africa, are often used as examples of structural violence. Despite the various positions advanced by writers on the idea of violence, Huber and Agang unanimously concur that violence can best be defined by its characteristics, forms or defenders. This holds that violence should be considered or defined from the perspective of the victim, the effect and the consequences (Agang 2010:30; Huber 2010:2; Daniel 2014:32). In the situation in the Middle Belt region, violence manifests in the form of outbursts of anger against what people value, like the destruction of lives and property. In addition, violence is evident in terms of the use of ethnic, tribal and religious differences to prevent people from developing and using their capabilities.

1.5.4 RECONCILIATION

According to De la Rey (2001:1), "[r]econciliation is a complex concept. As is the case with many concepts that describe human interaction, it cannot be easily defined". De la Rey further argues that reconciliation has been interpreted in many different ways and it has been given form

through a range of structures and processes that vary across contexts and boundaries. For example, Hamber and Van der Merwe (1998:1) propose five different kinds of reconciliation: (1) a non-racial ideology of reconciliation, (2) reconciliation as an ideology based on an intercommunal understanding, (3) a strongly religious ideology of reconciliation, (4) a human rights approach, (5) and the understanding of reconciliation as a form of community building. With the exception of the non-racial ideology of reconciliation, all forms of reconciliation proposed above are in one way or another important to the study. The study, however, adopts the form of reconciliation that Bar-Tal (2000:356) refers to as "[a] societal-cultural process that encompasses the majority of society members forming new beliefs about the former adversary, about their own society, and about relationships". The new beliefs also involve the restoration of relationships that have been fractured, moving from strife or antagonism to a more positive relationship and the understanding that the true icon is one's neighbour, whoever that may be, the human being who has been created in the image and with the likeness of God (De la Rey 2001:7; Amos 2006:22). This means the study considers reconciliation as a process, not an occasion or event, but rather an ongoing phenomenon with various stages or steps.

In addition, the study's understanding of reconciliation is basically informed by the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50. That is, reconciliation based on building a common future. In other words, people change their thoughts toward one another after many years of strife and separation for the sake of building a common future. People forgive one another after many years of strife and separation without demanding for confession of the evil done in the past for the sake of building a common future. People come together, stay together, and prosper together after many years of strife and separation for the sake of building a common future.

1.5.5 SOCIAL COHESION

The study considered social cohesion according to the understanding of the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) (2014:95) that "[s]ocial cohesion is defined as the degree of social integration and inclusion in the changing communities in a diverse society with a history of division and inequality". In other words, a community or society is cohesive if the inequalities, exclusions, discrimination and marginalisation based on ethnicity, religion, region, race or any other distinctions that engender divisions, conflicts and violence are reduced or

eliminated based on the fact that all human beings are created in the image and with the likeness of God. In mapping out some elements of social cohesion, the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) (2014:96-96) identified some elements that capture the study's aims for social cohesion in the Middle Belt region. The first element is *belonging* – a situation that people in a community felt part of as a result of which they experienced a sense of affiliation to the community and larger society. In other words, social cohesion as belonging in divisive society involves processes of identification and acceptance within the community, ethnic groups, religious groups and the larger society. Another element of social cohesion is *inclusion*. That is, treatment of humankind on an equal basis irrespective of ethnicity, tribe or religion, in all social activities, rights and equal access to all life opportunities. Social cohesion also incorporates *participation*, which means creating environment for involvement in activities and programmes that promote human well-being in a community. *Recognition* is also an element of social cohesion, and is a situation in which ethnic and religious diversity are recognised and acknowledged without discrimination. Social cohesion also incorporates *co-operation*, which means a willingness to work in the community's social projects with diverse citizens without religious and ethnic prejudice or sentiment. Finally, an aspect of social cohesion is *belief*. That is having confidence that ethnic and religious diversity are a gift from God and a blessing for nation building and promotion of human well-being.

1.5.6 PREACHING

There are diverse definitions of preaching, but the following definitions are considered based on the focus and purpose of this study. For instance, Hall (1971:109) considers preaching to be a bifocal and two-dimensional activity, connecting both the realities of human existence and the content and meaning of the gospel of Christ. That is, preaching happens when the preacher is both honestly involved in the present conditions of the listeners and genuinely identified with the source of Christian faith – the biblical text.

Neaves (1980:109) posits that preaching is not an exposition of the Word alone, but an exposition of the Word in the context of the world. This means preaching becomes a real Word-event when its stand between the Word and the world, keeping both in a balanced perspective.

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What is more, Tisdale (1997:xii) posits that "[p]reaching is an act of constructing 'local theology' that is, theology crafted for a very particular people in a particular place and time". This denotes that preaching is a highly contextual act requiring its practitioners to consider context as seriously as they consider the biblical text in the interpretive process. The preacher's perfect example is God, who became incarnate for the sake of meeting humankind on their turf.

Van Seters (1988:16), who considers preaching as a social act, denotes that preaching is an act in which theology and the concrete reality of society are linked. That is, every sermon is uttered by a socialised being to a social entity in a specific, social context and always at a social moment. Even the sacred texts that ground preaching come to expression in the culture of a community – whether in ancient Israel or the early church (Van Seters 1988:17).

From the above reflections on preaching, the study considers preaching to be the proclamation of the Word in a particular place and time, i.e. developing a homiletical approach to the concrete realities for a particular need in a particular place. This means preaching reconciliation in Middle Belt region is an act of constructing a local theology that may respond to the challenge of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the region. A homiletical approach that may help preachers in the Middle Belt region make the Word of God meaningful in a situation where ethnic, tribal and religious difference are used to marginalise, discriminate and exclude other people.

1.5.7 NARRATIVE PREACHING

There are many definitions of narrative preaching, but the following are considered relevant to the study. For example, Van Rensburg (2003:56) asserts that "[n]arratives preaching is the artistic arrangement and telling of events in such a way that the story has its ultimate effect in its sermonic context". Wilson-Kastner (1989:12) considers narrative preaching as "[p]reaching that concerns itself primarily with plot, the sequence of events as arranged by the author and characters, motivations, and conflicts." In addition, MacClellan (1999:12) defines narrative preaching as "[t]he proclamation of a narrative text of scripture through the unfolding of that narrative in a way that allows the congregation to participate in the plot, conflict, characters, and resulting call to action which arises from the meaning and intent of the text". Lowry's (1995:342) definition of narrative preaching, however, is more relevant to the objectives of the

study, namely that narrative preaching is a story like a process of preaching, moving from opening conflict through complication, toward a reversal or decisive turn, resulting in a conclusion or resolution of thought and experience. The plotting movement is nuanced differently depending on the particular text, theme and sermonic purpose. This means that narrative preaching is a preaching that follows the ordering elements of a plot.[3]

From the foregoing definitions of narrative preaching, it can be argued that what defines narrative preaching is structure. In other words, the overall shape of the sermon is keyed to the definition of narrative preaching (Lowry 1995:342; 1997:24). As Craddock would say, "Communication may be narrative like and yet contain a rich variety of materials: poetry, polemic, anecdote, humor, exegetical analysis, commentary" (Craddock, cited in Lowry 1997:23). This means that not all narrative sermons are story sermons; some sermons that contain stories may not be narrative sermons because the entire sermon is not shaped into narrative form. Some narrative sermons may not use stories in their plot that moves from conflict to resolution (Holbert 2010:16).[4] Sometimes a narrative sermon consists of one long story, whether biblical or otherwise. In this case, the sermon will involve narrative elements such as setting, characters, action and tone, all moving the plot line from opening uncertainty toward a final resolution.

In most cases, however, narrative preaching intertwines biblical and non-biblical stories at the same time.[5] Thulin suggests three helpful ways for the use of non-biblical stories in narrative preaching. First, the use of non-biblical as the context; that is, a non-biblical story is used to serve as prologue in which the biblical narrative can be heard with a sense of immediacy.

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[3] *Plot* is the plan of the story, sometimes called action. It is the chain of events in the narrative. In the plot there is a conflict to be resolved, a source of tension to be relieved, or a mystery to be solved. In mystery stories, the term *denouement* is used to describe the "unraveling" of the knotty tangle of the conflict. The conflict may be between two characters, or between a character and his environment. It may be an inner conflict, such as David confessed in Psalm 91. In Scripture, the basic conflict is between a rebellious person (or people) and God (Tucker 2005:2).

[4] Narrative preaching can contain stories, but all story-sermons are not narrative preaching. Even though any sermon contains stories, it may not be narrative preaching when the sermon does not follow the form of a plot. Narrative preaching is more than mere storytelling or story-sermons. It is, rather, storytelling that contains a plot and attempts to analyse and resolve ambiguity, or conflict (Rose 1997:75; Je Lee 2003:68).

[5] Regarding narrative preaching, the study hold on to the position that the biblical text should always be central to preaching. That is, the biblical text should always be given a voice and hearing. The gracious word of God should be expressed in such a way that its claim becomes real to those who speak and to those who listen. As such, narrative preaching focuses centrally on retelling of stories recorded in both the Old and New Testaments (Thulin 1990:7).

Secondly, the non-biblical story is used as a demonstrative conclusion to the biblical story. Here the biblical story is told and the non-biblical story is used to explore or test the truth proclaimed by the biblical story. For example, the exploration uses a question like, under what circumstances is the biblical story proclaimed is true? Is the biblical story proclaimed true for everyone? And how does the biblical story proclaim itself in the daily lives of people within the context of preaching? These questions can be answered by introducing non-biblical stories after the biblical story. The third modality of using a non-biblical story is interweaving the biblical and non-biblical stories together. That is, biblical and non-biblical stories are interwoven in such a way that they form one story from beginning to the end (Thulin 1990:13-17).

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The research is significance in that "[n]arrative constitutes one of the first and most durable strategies human beings employ for the creation and shaping of experience. In addition, narrative serves as the most primal and memorable means for ordering and communicating the experiences that shape personal and collective lives (MacClellan 1999:6). In narrative preaching, the preacher uses plot or stories to weave the fabric of human situations together so that life is shaped, transformed or takes on new meaning. As such, the research is an analysis of how the narrative of Genesis 37-50 may be used to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the situation of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The reason is that, in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are confronted with a reality that division based on ethnic, tribal and religious differences is a vice to be overcome. This means reconciliation and social cohesion do not mean that all members of the community should be of the same ethnic group, tribe or religion. They do not have to be one ethnic group or one religion. Jacob remains distinct from Joseph. And Joseph is not Judah or Simeon. In fact, Judah is not Reuben. Each approaches his contribution in his own way for the sake of the future. Reconciliation crosses all distinctions and unites the separation created by conflict into one body of people created in the image of God (Coats 1980:33).

The significance of this research is manifold. Firstly, this research could serve as a tool for preaching that sensitises the churches in Middle Belt region of Nigeria to redefine their existence and calling in the light of their roles in promoting reconciliation and social cohesion. This is because churches are the only institutions that have structures that penetrate every nook and

cranny of Middle Belt, thereby making them the most effective and only institutions that are well positioned to promote reconciliation and social cohesion at all levels, higher and lower, urban and rural, rich and poor, and educated and uneducated, in the Middle Belt region.

Furthermore, the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers calls for crossing the religious and ethnic frontiers, distinctions, boundaries that dichotomise and polarise people in the Middle Belt region into one body of human beings created in the image of God. As such, the research will be a helpful tool for government steps and policies for dialogue, the promotion of reconciliation among tribes, ethnic and religious groups, and as a guide for the creation of employment opportunities in the region. What is more, the research will be helpful for NGOs in their quest for promoting peace, reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region. The research will also provide good resource material for the research institute for Middle Belt regional studies.

1.7 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

This study is divided into seven chapters:

1.7.1 Chapter 1

The first chapter gives the general background to the study with regard to ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, and the use of the narrative of Genesis 37-50 to provide a framework for preaching reconciliation and social cohesion. The research question(s) and research significance were also presented, and the scope, methodology and research design and some key terms were explained. Finally, the outline of the chapters is provided.

1.7.2 Chapter 2

This chapter is the interpretation of the situation of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, such as how ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence are rooted in the constitution of the region, the motivation for using preaching to promote reconciliation and social cohesion, some of the actions and inactions that fuel ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence, and some negative impacts of the ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

1.7.3 Chapter 3

The focus of Chapter 3 is the analysis of some methods of using narratives for preaching reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. As such, the theory of narrative preaching, the efficacy of narratives for preaching reconciliation, the importance of stories in African society, narratives as a point of identification, narratives as creative imagination and narratives as sermon illustration are considered.

1.7.4 Chapter 4

This chapter identifies some possible themes from the biblical texts of Genesis 37-50 that may be helpful for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Themes like defamation of character, egocentrism, favouritism, dehumanisation, pain and trauma were examined through a careful study of the way the characters are portrayed in the texts of Genesis 37-50.

1.7.5 Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, the study considered the way in which the healing of society manifests itself in terms of reconciliation in the narrative of Genesis 37-50. It therefore looks at how characters in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers exhibit characteristics of transformation or change that enable reconciliation, forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past as a significant aspect of reconciliation, and Joseph and his brothers are depicted as coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation, thus serving as a symbol of true reconciliation.

1.7.6 Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, the focus of the study is how the aspects of reconciliation found in the narrative of Genesis 37-50 may be preach using different preaching techniques, such as pastoral preaching, prophetic preaching, economic preaching, biographical preaching, and preaching reconciliation as a lament.

1.7.7 Chapter 7

The last chapter revisits the research question and objectives formulated in the initial chapter. This chapter also summarises the entire study and makes recommendations based on the findings, as well as proposes further research. The final conclusion of the entire research follows at the end of this chapter. The question is: "How may preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers found in Genesis 37-50 enable reconciliation and social cohesion in a situation of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria?"

Chapter 2

Analysis of the Nigerian Middle Belt Region Context

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Preaching, and preaching reconciliation in particular, involve proper analysis of context. In other words, preaching reconciliation requires the application of the preacher's skill in interpreting the texts of congregational life and activity (Tisdale 1997:56). Cilliers (2004:144) notes that targeting of the congregation and its own context implies that preaching attains a unique, relevant character. This implies that context determines the focus and purpose of preaching. For instance, the preaching of the sage and the prophets demonstrates a proper grasp of context. The preaching of Jesus Christ and the apostles reveals good knowledge of context. What is more, the history of the church also reveals that the preaching of church fathers, the reformers, the puritans, and friars was largely determined by the context in which they lived (Daniel 2014:80-81).

Therefore, the study considered the analysis of context as a proper exegesis of the environment in which preaching takes place. Stated differently, analysis of context was used to plumb the depths of congregational environments in order to come to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of their subcultural assumptions (Tisdale 1997:56). Furthermore, analysing context means to probe the necessities and conditions of the setting where preaching is done so as to make the word of God relevant to the listeners. This is because proper exegesis of the theological content of the text – that is God's words or deeds as they emerge from the text, and the life situation of the listeners – enables preaching to strike the listeners where they are without missing them (Pieterse 2001:72).

The task of preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region requires an examination of the use of ethnicity and religion to discriminates, exclude, segregate and marginalise other people. It is, then, the exegesis, that is the interpretation of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, that this chapter focuses on – the constitution of the Middle Belt region, divisive ethnicity and religion, causes of divisive ethnicity and religion, delineation of conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region.

In preaching, however, there are two aspects of context, that is context as place and context as time. The next section considers context as a place, that is the constitution of the Middle Belt region.

2.2 THE MIDDLE BELT REGION OF NIGERIA

Preaching takes place in a particular environment; that is, the word of God has always been preached to a particular people at a particular location. Gonzales and Gonzalez (1988:29) aptly argue that "[e]ach act of preaching takes place within a unique constellation of context and that the more that constellation changes the more will the meaning of the sermon itself change, even if it is repeated verbatim". In the same manner, Cilliers (2004:144) argues that "preaching must strike people where they are otherwise the sermon will miss them". In this regard, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is being explained because its constitution to a large extent motivated undertaking a study on preaching reconciliation.

It is difficult to define the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. In this study, however, I consider the Middle Belt region of Nigeria to be the geographical belt of the South of Northern Nigeria and the North of Southern Nigeria. In other words, the Middle Belt region is the central region or midlands between the Southern and Northern part of the country (Adamu & Ben 2015:12; Emmanuel & Tari 2015:2). The communities in the Middle Belt region form a belt of minority ethnic groups that lie between the larger Hausa/Fulani belt of the North, and the Igbo, Yoruba and minority ethnic groups of the South. Ewuga (2006:199) understands the Middle Belt to be constituted by a collection of ethnic nationalities that inhabit central Nigeria. As a matter of fact, these communities are called the *Middle Belt* because they form a geographical cultural buffer region in the middle between Northern and Southern Nigeria.[6] The Middle Belt region may further be explained in the following ways. Predominate

2.2.1 MIDDLE BELT AS A REGION WITH ETHNIC DIVERSITY

There is no consensus among scholars on what constitutes the Middle Belt region. The study, however, construes the Middle Belt region of Nigeria based on the motivation for the research.

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[6] The focus of the study is not so much on the geographical location but on the constitution of the Middle Belt region. That is the concern of the study is how ethnic and religious identity are used to discriminate, exclude, and marginalize people in a region where Christianity predominate.

For example, the Middle Belt region is a plural society that is defined by socio-cultural and institutional diversity between (largely minority) ethnic nationalities of various populations. Stated differently, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is made up of indigenous ethnic groups that pre-date colonial experience in the sub-region. Many renowned researchers and scholars have confirmed this important feature of the region. For instance, Logams (2004) describes the Middle Belt region as having the highest socio-political and religious plurality of any of the regional units of the Nigerian federation. Action Aid (2008:2) considers Middle Belt as the region with the highest concentration of minority ethnic groups in the North in particular, and in Nigeria as a whole in terms of culture, population, religious beliefs, language, territorial claims and land ownership. More so, a survey conducted by British colonial authorities in 1926 revealed that Nigeria comprises about 416 ethnic groups. Of this number, 219, representing seventy per cent, were found in the Middle Belt region (Blitz, 1965 cited in Okpeh, 2008:31).

In addition, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programmed (2012:48), observed that the Middle Belt hosts about two-thirds of Nigeria's estimated 383 ethnic nationalities, as well as 400 linguistic groups. What is more, Suleiman (2012:21) maintains that "[t]he Middle Belt is one of the areas of greatest cultural and linguistic diversity in the whole West Africa". This implies that the region plays host to the largest chunk of ethnic minorities in Nigeria (Anthony 2014:57). In other words, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is a collection of diverse ethnic groups, diverse tribes with diverse cultures, diverse languages and diverse religions. These ethnic groups occupy the southern part of Northern Nigeria, an area that includes the Nigerian federal states of Benue, Nassarawa, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Southern Kebbi, Kogi, Niger, Southern Kaduna, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Southern Gombe and Southern Bauchi (Turaki 2012; Adamu & Ben 2015:10). The high concentration of diverse minorities and the accompanying inequalities between them makes the region a breeding ground for ethnic, tribal and religious violence. It also underscores the need for preaching reconciliation in the region.

2.2.2 MIDDLE BELT AS A PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN REGION

Besides the perception of the Middle Belt region as a collection of multi-ethnic groups, tribes, cultures and religions, some scholars consider the Middle Belt region in the context of religion. In other words, the Middle Belt region is an area dominated by northern Christians as against

their Muslim counterparts. This means the Middle Belt region has the highest concentration of non-Muslim groups in Northern Nigeria. By this, Northern Nigeria is divided into two. The far north, which is an area with a high concentration of Muslims, and the south, which is predominately Christian and African Traditionalist, with few Muslims. The reason why Christianity is predominant in the Middle Belt region is due to the policies of colonial rulers against missionaries in northern Nigeria. British colonial policy on religion in northern Nigeria allowed Christian missions to operate in the non-Muslim areas, but prevented them from entry into areas considered dominated by Muslims, keeping the missions among 'animist' groups in the central belt of Nigeria.[7] This saw the emergence and spread of Christianity as a dominant religion in the Middle Belt region (Galadima & Turaki 2001:88; Gaiya 2004:358; Suleiman 2012:21-22). That is, the missionaries were pushed to the minority ethnic and tribal groups scattered in the southern part of northern Nigeria, and as such Christianity became predominant in the Middle Belt region.

Furthermore, Christianity is predominant in the Middle Belt region because, in the absence of a strong history of cohesion and common language, Christianity became the source of identity and a common cultural denominator among the non-Muslim groups and non-Muslim communities of the Middle Belt region (Suleiman 2012:21). Their particularistic religions and world views gave way to Christian universalism.[8] As a matter of fact, Christianity formed part of the basis for the formation of the Middle Belt region. Christianity was the rallying point around which Middle Belt consciousness was originally activated (Barnes 2007:594-595; Suleiman 2012:18).[9] The assertion that the Middle Belt region has a great concentration of Christians and that Christianity

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[7] The policy of preventing missionaries in the emirates was a consequence of the system of indirect rule practised by the colonial power. In northern Nigeria, this meant that the British gave the emirates status as Native Authorities and recognised the emirs as the authorities responsible for local government. Under colonial rule, the emir also controlled the police force, as well as the so-called native courts, which derived from native law as conceived by the colonial administration (Yahaya 1980:97).

[8] The Middle Belt region of Nigeria was populated by many ethnic groups that had not embraced Islam and had been organised as relatively small, autonomous communities before colonialism. These groups saw Islam as linked to the emirates. As powerful political entities, the emirates extended their influence into bordering areas, and during the 1800s slave raids were common there. Christianity offered an alternative worldview, and helped to connect the different ethnic groups in the Middle Belt region that resisted the power of the emirates (Angerbrandt 2015:36).

[9] Groups of northern Christians first came together in 1949 over the formation of the Middle Belt region. Significantly, the organisation they established was known as the Non-Muslim League (NML), a reflection of the shared perception on the part of the participants that what they had in common was a desire to be free of the Muslim political control that was to be implemented throughout the northern region (Barnes 2007:594-595).

is one of the major sources of identity became the motivation behind the use of preaching, and narrative preaching in particular, as a technique for promoting reconciliation and social cohesion in the region.

In the foregoing, it is argued that the necessity of preaching reconciliation and social cohesion is rooted in the constitution of the Middle Belt region as an area with a high concentration of diverse ethnic groups, tribes, cultures, languages and religion. Also, the motivation behind the use of preaching as a technique for promoting reconciliation is based on the fact that Christianity is the dominant religion and major source of identity in the region. The study will now consider the situation of divisive ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region.

2.3 THE CONTEXTUAL SITUATION OF THE MIDDLE BELT REGION

Besides targeting a particular location, preaching also involves focusing on a particular time. That is, preaching targets a particular need. Great theologians like Saint Augustine and Gregory the Great emphasised that, if preaching is to be credible, it must do justice to the different needs, dispositions and situations of the hearers (Otto 2005:332). Cilliers (2004:144) argues that, "[o]ften, preachers think they know people, that they are aware of people's circumstances. However, frequently this is not the case. Contextualizing demands time, attention and sensitivity". While preparing for the sermon, the preacher must be conscious and sensitive to the needs of the congregation. This means preaching should focus on what is going on within the context of preaching. In other words, the preacher goes to the Scripture, but not alone; that is, the preacher goes on behalf of the faithful community and, in a sense, on behalf of the world. Their questions and needs are in the preacher's mind and heart. With such a burden, the preacher explores the Scripture, faithfully expecting to discover the truth of God's claim there (Long 2005:49). In this regard, the study focuses on two aspect of the Middle Belt region. Firstly, the situation of ethnic divisions, conflicts and violence and, secondly, the situation of religious divisions, conflict and violence. That is, the use of ethnic and religious differences to marginalise, discriminate and dehumanise people is explained as a necessity for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

2.3.1 ETHNIC DIVISIONS, CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

For African people, ethnicity is an empowering force that creates a sense of personhood for groups of people. According to Maigadi (2006:15), "[t]he word has its root from the Greek word ethnos, which means nation or people". Elsewhere, Maigadi (2006:19) defines ethnicity as a "[c]ultural phenomenon that relates a people to their roots, beliefs, and values, providing them with a deep sense of self-identity in the course of their interaction with others. Such self-identity makes the group feel a sense of uniqueness as a people within a larger social context". This means ethnicity is not bad and, as a matter of fact, is a gift from God.

Mwaura, however, observes that about 19 of the 53 African states are either experiencing war or conflict or are in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. This is because ethnic loyalty and ethnic tensions exist in Africa. This situation has robbed the Church of its ability to create a new community in Christ (Mwaura 2009:22). Therefore, the focus of this study was how the beautiful gift of ethnic diversity that comes from God has become a weapon for discrimination to the point of genocide among diverse ethnic groups, tribes and religions in the Middle Belt region. That is, ethnic diversity had been turned into an ugly phenomenon that causes relentless hatred among many ethnic groups, tribes and religions in the region. This, inter alia, means that divisive ethnicity come into play when ethnic differences are mobilised to marginalise, polarise, exclude and devalue people.[10]

Nigeria is one of the countries in African that is highly plagued by the ugly phenomenon of ethnic divisions, conflict and violence. After more than fifty years of independence, there is continued violent conflict on the basis of ethnic differences in the country. Onwuzuruigbo (2010:1797) infers that, "[e]merging from colonialism in 1960, Nigerians pledged to live together irrespective of their religious and ethnic differences. This wish was strongly expressed

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[10] Ethnic divisions have proved a major impediment to the attainment of social cohesion and stable democracy all over the African continent. This is because African societies are primordially multi-ethnic, with populations sharply divided along racial, cultural, tribal, kinship, linguistic and religious lines (Adamu & Ben 2015:6). Kamaara (2010) notes that "[t]he expectation upon political independence was that citizens of African countries would break out of the boundaries of ethnicity, embrace secular nation-state identity and develop a rational scientific view of development and treat individuals as autonomous entities". But the opposite is the reality, because more than fifty years after independence, ethnic conflicts characterise much of the African continent. As African states evolve into political nations, there is more contestation over space, land, power and control of resources due to ethno-regional and religious divisions (Adamu & Ben 2015:6-7). For example, Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia and a host of other nations in Africa are consumed by resource struggles, identity conflicts and wars (Onwuzuruigbo 2010:1798).

in the third and fourth lines of her moribund national anthem". But the reverse is the case because ethnic contestation and conflicts have been relentless in Nigeria since independence. Akpar (2012) similarly observes that, "[r]ight from independence in 1960, Nigeria has been plagued by civil disturbances over citizen rights and opportunities by ethnic or religious groups who identify and target other groups either for discrimination or forced relocation from a particular terrain with all the violent means at their disposal".

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria harbours more battlefronts and invariably undeclared civil war than any region in Nigeria. Hundreds of ethnic groups within the region have a history of conflict with one another. These include the Tiv, Jukun, Igala, Igbirra, Idoma, Nupe, Gbayi, Birom, Angas, Tangale, Waja, Tula and Dadiya, among many others (Suleiman 2012:21). According to Alubo (2011:11-12), "[o]ne could argue that nowhere else is a civil disturbance, and the broader contests for citizenship, identity, and politics of inclusion and exclusion, more ferocious and persistent than Middle Belt region of Nigeria". Adamu and Ben (2015:12) observe that "[v]iolent conflict in the Middle Belt region has flared up periodically over the last 10 years, pitting Muslims against Christians, settlers against indigenes, one ethnic group against the other, including confrontations between different Islamic sects". Alubo (2011) states further that there is no state in the Middle Belt region that has not experienced a number of violent conflicts in the last three years. This is exacerbated by the fact that, at all levels of society, ethnic differences are exploited in order to marginalise, exclude, segregate and discriminate against others. This often results in ethnic violence – inter and intra-communal conflict and violence, poverty, corruption and various other forms of insecurity. Akin to ethnic divisions, conflicts and violence are religious conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region. The next section will examine this closely.

2.3.2 RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS, CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Religion is said to be a universal phenomenon that transcends ethnic affiliation and geographical location. It is part of people's everyday lives. As Idowu (1973) argues religion is very much and always with us. It is with us in every moment of life, in our innermost being and with regard to the great or minor events of life. Mbiti (1970) stresses that "Africans are notoriously religious". Nigeria, in particular, has the reputation of being a deeply religious country. McCain (2008) asserts that "there is a church on every corner in Nigeria…. And that there is no more sleeping in

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any Nigeria city again after 5.00 AM". This is as a result of the early daily call on the Muslim faithful to prayer. Even African traditional religions are attracting a lot of adherence today. According to Okediji (2015:73), "there are a serious revival and transformation on-going in African traditional religion as against what it used to be". No wonder then that, in 2012, Nigeria was declared the most religious country in the world by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The survey, tagged "What the World Thinks of God", covers countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Israel, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico and Lebanon. Nigeria came top, with 90% of the population believing in God, praying regularly and affirming their readiness to die on behalf of their belief (Omomia 2015:60).

The surprising thing is that the pivot of most of the religious ethical teachings is love, peace and unity (harmony). Okediji (2015:73) aptly argues that "[a]ll the three predominant religions in Nigeria (Islam, Christianity and African traditional religion) detest hatred, anarchy, acrimony, conflicts, killing of human life and wanton destruction of properties". This means all three religions respect the sanctity of human life, thereby essential ingredients of peaceful co-existence are enshrined in teaching and preaching morality, tolerance, accountability and sympathy for one another and good neighbourliness (Omolade 2009).

For instance, the African indigenous religions (African traditional religions) are said to be a cohesive force in African societies. Almost everything is done jointly – wholesome human relations among Africans in forms of respect for elders, community fellow-feeling, and sense of the sacredness of life. In addition, the sociological concept of brotherhood, extended family, kinship, clan cooperation, unity and solidarity reveals the high premium African indigenous religion places on the sacredness of human life (Sofola 1982). Islam, on the other hand, is claimed by its adherents to be a religion of peace. This is reflected in the mode of greetings among the Muslim faithful: "As-salaamu alaykum", which means "Peace be unto you". Islam, they say, encourages peace, tolerance and harmonious coexistence. For example, in Qur'an 7:46 and 10:10, the prophets and the four orthodox caliphs discourage anarchy and the holding of grudges against anyone. Ayantayo (2002) highlights eight position of Qur'an on how Muslims should behave towards Christians or the adherents of other faiths. These include tolerance (Q 2:256, 109:1-6), Avoidance of bad language (Q 6:108), invitation to discussion (Q 3:64), topic

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and style of discussion (Q 3:64), encouragement of friendship (Q 5:5), and avoiding ill treatment of Jews, Christians and other believers (Q 2:190). In the Bible (Mathew 22: 38-40), Jesus insists that God's law can be summarised in two commandments, one of which is "love your neighbour as yourself". Adherents of Christianity are not to seek revenge (Romans 12: 14-21), but are to pray for the enemies who maltreat or oppress them (Luke 6: 28). The aforementioned socio-religious values embedded in the three predominant religions of Nigeria are completely void of unnecessary killing and violence.

However, starting from the early 1980s, Nigeria, and other countries of the world, have experienced the direct opposite of what religions propagate. Instead of peace, it is hostility and crisis, and the unity of the country is under threat. Security of life and property is threatened (Okediji 2015:74). Usher (2012:142) aptly observes that Nigeria has been plunged into a deep mess that may be referred to as religious divisions, conflict and violence. Usher further argues that the prevailing religious conflicts, persistent religious riots, rampant killings of innocent people and destruction of property, all in the name of religion, are indicative of the fact that religious divisions, conflict and violence have taken over the Nigerian scene. The study concurs with Usher's assertion that the scenario of negative religious activities is a clear indication that religious divisions, conflict and violence have taken root among Nigerians. For example, why would religions that preach peace, love and the sanctity of human life become breeding grounds of hatred, animosity and the merciless killing of humankind? Why would religions that ascribe their existence to God's glory champion the destruction of human beings, the most honoured and the revered of God's creature? The rate at which brothers, co-tenants, co-workers, business partners and neighbours, fellow Nigerians and, above all, fellow human beings created in the image of God, are killing and destroying one another and properties in the name of religious differences is an indication of religious divisions, conflict and violence.

There are some actions or inactions that fuel ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region. These are examined closely in the next section.

2.4 CAUSES OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS, CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE BELT REGION

Preaching, and preaching reconciliation in particular, requires the preacher to dig deeper into uncertainties to determine all that is really at stake. In other words, preaching reconciliation involves probing the causative ingredients responsible for division and conflicts. The preacher seeking to know what is going on is fundamental to preaching, because the responsibility of preaching the gospel requires probing behind the behaviour to the motives, fears and needs in order to ascertain the cause or causes. As Lowry (1980:37-40) says, a medical doctor does not prescribe surgery for a minor cut, nor does he or she put a Band-Aid on cancer. It is when the question of what is wrong has been settled that the choice of cure is limited. Lowry further argues that, likewise, preaching is centred on a gap, a void and a discrepancy between what is and what can be or ought to be. So the diagnosis of that gap is central to the task of preaching.

In preaching reconciliation, the preacher, through analysis, seeks to know why there is conflict. That is, he/she seeks reasons for the occurrences by asking the question, "why is this going on?" (Osmer 2008:82). The key question is, "what contributes to or fuels divisions, conflict and violence within the context of preaching?" In answering the question, "why is there division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria?" the study consider the following.

2.4.1 TRADITIONAL AFRICAN CONCEPT OF ETHNICITY

Divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region are fuelled by the traditional African concept of ethnicity. Stated differently, divisions, conflicts and violence are fuelled because of the use of the ancestral blood group of kinship and communal values to discriminate against and exclude others. Turaki (2001:89) explains how the traditional African concept of ethnicity promotes and enshrines discrimination and exclusion:

> The law of kinship defines in unequivocal terms those who are insiders and outsiders. Outsiders and strangers do not belong and on account of this, they are not entitled to equal treatment, ownership, affinity, loyalty and obligation, community rights and protection, and they are not a people, they are outside of the commonwealth, they are strangers.

In addition, tribalism/nepotism that makes people feel they are marginalised, excluded and side-lined is rooted in the traditional African concept of ethnicity. In other words, the African traditional concept of blood group and kinship make those termed as outsiders feel marginalised, discriminated against and excluded. This is because the traditional African concept of ethnicity destroys impartiality, destroys equal treatment, destroys treatment based on merit or excellence, and breeds nepotism and partiality. What is more, the traditional African concept of ethnicity engenders affinity, obligations and loyalty of one to a specific ethnic group, tribe, clan and family. It has an adverse effect on development, because employment or admission into institutions of learning in certain areas is only offered to a particular ethnic group, tribe, clan or family, even if they are not qualified. Those who do qualify are sometimes denied because they are termed outsiders, strangers and foreigners.

Divisive ethnicity and religion are also prominent among those who hold on to the traditional African concept of ethnicity, because human rights are not rooted in individuality, but in both ancestral land and ancestral blood group. Rights are not deposited in anything outside of the communal kinship system and ancestral land. The questions and definitions of modern concepts, such as citizenship, nativity or indigeneship, settlers or strangers, are deeply rooted in ethnic values. Issues such as cultural and religious rights, ancestral land rights, chieftaincy and traditional rights are all rooted in ethnic values. For instance, the controversial issue of indigene and settler, which cause massive destruction of lives and properties worth billions of naira in Nigeria, is rooted in the traditional African concept of ethnicity. Omotoso (n.d.) aptly argues that the most significant cause of communal violence in Nigeria is the entrenched divisions throughout the country between people considered indigenous to an area and those regarded as mere settlers. Even though people may have lived in an area for hundreds of years, and have contributed to the economic and social spheres of the community, they are consistently reminded of their status and technically discriminated against in terms of land ownership, total control of commerce and education, among others. Notably, it is the struggle to have a fair share from which most of the conflicts/struggles emanate. Virtually every state and local government in Nigeria has witnessed conflicts and violence as a result of some people considering themselves indigene while others are termed settlers.

Research on conflicts and violence based on ethnic and religious divisions in the Middle Belt region shows that the indigene and settler phenomenon is one of the root causes of violence. For instance, in Plateau State, studies by Omotoso (n.d.) have revealed that, among the key flash points (area) where indigene/settler confrontation have arisen and are arising intermittently are in Jos, where the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom consider themselves as indigene, while the Hausa-Fulani are called settlers. In Wase, it is against the indigene Taroh and Jukun Hausa-Fulani. In Yelwa, the indigenous tribes are fighting the Goemai and Jarawa (Hausa-Fulani settlers). The Shendam, Bakin Gyawa, Kadarko and Saya areas are also witnessing armed rivalry between the indigenous and settler tribes.

Nwanegbo et al. (2014:9) note that, in Taraba State, the popular use of indigene/settler as a means of discriminating against other ethnic groups or separating owners of the land from migrants has become an important factor in the socio-political life of Jukun society. In fact, for the Christian Jukuns and the traditionalists, the Jukuns/Hausa Muslims are settlers and should be prevented from playing a central role in the affairs of the Jukuns and/or participating in opportunities meant for the Jukuns. In contrast, Jukun Muslims or those with Hausa blood (regarded by the Christian/traditionalist Jukuns as Hausa people) have an equally strong claim to Jukun society as the land of their paternal or maternal ancestry, and thus see themselves as equal stakeholders in all Jukun affairs. Over the years, these discriminatory tendencies have led to the building up of accumulated grievances and tension, conflict and violence among the Jukuns.

In Nassarawa State, violence erupted between Alago et al. and the Tiv, which resulted in wide-scale killings, burning of property and internal displacement of many people. There is also Bassa-Igbira-Gbagyi conflict in the same state. According to Tajudeen (2015:3), these three ethnic groups have been at loggerheads since 1986 and in several subsequent waves of violence. The grievances are related to claims over land and who arrived in the area first; i.e. who is an indigene and who is a settler. There are stereotypes on both sides with the Igbira claiming to be superior. In Kaduna State there were explosions of violence in Zangon Kataf in 1986, 1990 and 1992 between the Kataf (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani (settlers). Even in Abuja, the communal conflict between Fulani pastoralists and Gwari farmers in Gwako village in the Gwagwalada Area Council is ravaging the place (Alimba 2014:185-186). The story is the same in places like Southern Gombe, Southern Bauchi and the Adamawa States, where some consider

themselves as indigene while others are settlers. From all indications, the phenomenon of indigene and settler is rooted in the traditional African worldview on ethnicity, that is, the use of ancestral kinship and blood as a yardstick for discrimination against and exclusion of other people.

From the foregoing one can argue that the Middle Belt region is a fertile ground for the use of ancestral kinship and blood group to discriminate, exclude and marginalise others because it is a region with diverse ethnic groups, diverse tribes, diverse languages and diverse cultures. And each of the ethnic groups, tribes, clans and family use their link to a particular kinship and ancestral blood group to create division. The situation is correctly captured by Schipper (1999:2), who argues that human beings have created binaries, devising images of themselves as opposites of others. They have embedded such images in stories, songs and forms of artistic expression. Traditions, worldviews and religion also have been used to influence people's imagination about divisions. The scenario in the Middle Belt region is a chain of divisions. For example, among the ethnic groups there are intra-ethnic divisions, with all forms of exclusion and discrimination. Among the tribes there are intra-tribal divisions, with all forms of discrimination. Furthermore, among the clans there are intra-clan divisions where families discriminate against families. Among families, there are intra-family divisions where individuals discriminate against one another. As Schipper (1999:2) says, the boundaries between own and foreign are mobile and constantly redefined and manipulated; new situations followed by new interpretations make people modify earlier assumptions. This means division has no limit because it is human manipulation.

Akin to the traditional African worldview of ethnicity is the traditional African concept of land ownership and territorial boundary. Hence, divisive ethnicity in the Middle Belt region is fuelled by the traditional African concept of land ownership and territorial boundaries. The next section looks at these closely.

2.4.2 LAND OWNERSHIP AND TERRITORIAL BOUNDARY

Ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence are grounded in the traditional African concept of land ownership. In other words, ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence are rooted in the use of the traditional concept that land belongs to ancestors in order to define

who belongs and who does not belong in the Middle Belt region. Turaki (2012) argues that there is a very strong affinity in traditional Africa between the land and the ethnic group or tribe. The territory gives the land its location, scope and definition, while ancestry and kinship give it a stamp of ownership. Land cannot be defined in the absence of ancestry, just as ancestry cannot be defined without land. Therefore, land always belongs to the ancestors and kinship. Those who are not part of the ancestors and kinship are considered strangers, foreigners or settlers, and as such they cannot own land.[11]

Furthermore, in traditional Africa, land and its geography and sacredness are defined by ancestry and kinship. That is, the land is held in trust by the ancestors for the kinship community. No individual owns the land; it belongs to the ancestral kinship community under the spiritual guardians, the ancestors, and the divinities. Land, therefore, is ancestral and sacred (Turaki 2012). Land cannot be possessed by conquest. It can only be acquired or inherited through ancestral means. Both the use and possession of the land are defined in sacral ancestral terms. Thus, conquest and annexation of lands are religiously prohibited. Territorial expansion is out of the question. For this reason, many ancient ethnic groups did not have any expansionist philosophy of land, kingdom or territory. The land boundary was guarded seriously and any attempt at encroachment always resulted in division, conflict and violence.

For example, the Tiv[12] peoples' concept of land is portrayed by Alubo (2011:97) in the following words:

> The Tiv … do does not conceive their land simply as a tract of earth on which they live. For them land is sacred. It is the land of their ancestors. When one considers what it took them to acquire the land the trek, the wars then it is understandable that they are usually serious about their land. They are always on against encroachment on their land, and they take every measure to protect the land.

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[11] The traditional African concept of land ownership is about which ancestors or kinsfolk were the first to arrive and settle permanently in a place. An indigene or a native who arrived later is termed a settler.

[12] The Tiv are a national minority, but the largest ethnic group in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Their stronghold is Benue State, but their search for arable land to support agriculture has led to them pushing into neighbouring states, like Taraba, Plateau, Adamawa, Kogi, Nassarawa and Niger.

In the same manner, Zirra and Garba (2006:33) observed that, for farmers in the community of Adamawa State, "land is a heritage, sacred trust, and source of their means of livelihood that must be protected even at the point of death". In Plateau, Nassarawa, Southern Bauchi, Southern Gombe, Southern Kaduna and Taraba states the story is the same. As Omotoso (n.d.) says, the land is seen as a major inheritance, and as such they do not joke about it. Anything that threatens accessibility to land is seriously resisted. This explained why inter-conflict and intra-conflict and violence over land are high in the region. Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009:361) put it that studies have shown that conflicts arose in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria as a result of the loss of land and boundary encroachment, which affected what the people considered as the basis of their social, economic and spiritual existence. Attempt to discount the people from this ancestral heritage usually resulted in large-scale conflict.

Besides marginalisation and exclusion, the tendency that is embedded in traditional African philosophy of land ownership and boundary conflicts and violence over land is exacerbated by the fact that the major occupation of the ethnic groups who inhabit the Middle Belt region comprises farmers, with a few nomadic pastoralists. Best (2006:133) notes that "[t]he Middle Belt is one of the most marginalized regions in Nigeria. The larger part of the population is made of economically and politically disempowered rural-based peasant farming populations". The high concentration of farmers creates intense competition for land for farming in the region. The competition has led to divisions and conflicts among families, clans, tribes and ethnic groups.[13] Conroy (2014:9) notes that "[s]tudies on land conflict in Nigeria indicate that the majority of violence in the Middle Belt is due to land issues. In addition, according to Nigeria Watch database, 58.4% (1657 out of 2839) of violent deaths related to land issues occurred in the

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[13] As the population of people in the Middle Belt region kept increasing, with some ethnic groups becoming multi-ethnic groups, tribes becoming multi-tribes, clans becoming multi-clans, extended families becoming clans, and nuclear families becoming extended families, the contest and escalation of conflicts over space for farming kept increasing. Ethnic groups and tribes kept on fighting and killing one another. For instance, in Nasarawa in 1993, the Alago, Hausa and Tiv clashed over land and chieftaincy and, from 1995 to 2005, the Egburra and Bassa in Toto clashed over land, chieftaincy and politics. In 1989, 1990 and 1997, intra-communal conflict occurred in Ipav in Gboko of Benue State based on the land problem. In Taraba State, the struggle between the Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb over chieftaincy, which started in 1996, is still ongoing. In 2004, a conflict started in Adamawa State between the Bachama and Hausa/Fulani over land ownership, politics and religion. In June 2003, the Ekepedo and Ogori clashed over land ownership in Kogi/Edo states. Best (2006) argues that, in the Middle Belt region, the pressure on land from all directions heightens the proliferation of ethnic and communal conflicts in the region, including the political ones, most of them arising from the land question (Alimba 2014:187-188).

Middle Belt from June 2006 to May 2014". Maigadi (2006:5-6) studied the situation of conflict over land ownership and boundary in the Middle Belt region and explains it thus:

> In late 1991, two rival Nigerian ethnic groups, Tiv and the Jukun took to fighting over farmland. The same land problem repeated itself in 2001 necessitating the intervention of the army and resulting in loss of many lives and property worth millions of naira. In December 1989 a similar incident on the same issue (farmland) erupted in Gombe State between Tangale in Kaltungo and Tangale in Billiri. In March 2006 the Dadiya and Tula in the same Gombe State engaged in serious ethnic conflict over land which led to the loss of lives and property. In Bokkos and Mangu in Plateau State in May 1995. In 2006 the Angwai and the Kwala ethnic groups in Namu in Qua'an Pan Local Government Area in Plateau State had an ethnic conflict (Maigadi).

Lodiya (2010) also testifies that, for about three years, that is in May 2007, May 2009 and February 2010, the Kaltungo, Ture and Shongom people of Kaltungo and Shongom Local Government Areas, in the Kaltungo Chiefdom of Gombe State, clashed with the Dadiya people of Dadiya Chiefdom in Balanga Local Government of the same Gombe State. The central issue in these clashes was land. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 21, 22 and 23 May 2007, clashes led to 632 houses being burnt to ashes, hundreds of bags of foodstuffs, as well as animals, being carted away, and five people – two men and three women – were killed. There were similar clashes in 2009 and 2010 in which houses and property were destroyed. Besides the inter-ethnic and inter-tribes fracas over land ownership and boundaries, there are multiple intra-ethnic, intra-tribe, intra-clan and intra-family conflicts over land ownership and boundaries. These have resulted in conflict and violence, killing, and loss of life and property.

Akin to competition over space of land for farming, there is a conflict between farmers and the nomadic pastoralist. According to Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009:361), a study of major sources of conflict in the Middle Belt region revealed that the high percentage of conflict is as a result of disputes over land ownership, boundary matters and conflict between Fulani herdsmen and

farmers over grazing land.[14] The influx of nomadic pastoralist, especially the Fulanis, into the Middle Belt region is causing a lot of conflict over space for farming and grazing, water and encroachment of animals onto farms. For instance, studies by Adamu and Ben (2015:19) reveal that, following clashes between the Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups in Benue State, a total of 853 people have lost their lives since June 2014. While the Fulani herdsmen claimed to have lost 214 people, in addition to 3 200 cows, the Tiv people reportedly killed are estimated to be 633, excluding children and women who died in ramshackle camps in 2015. So far, the Tiv people in Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West, Makurdi and other towns on the border with Taraba State have recorded about 458 deaths, and over 350 communities have been sacked and are now living in refugee camps.[15]

The southern part of Taraba state is the worst hit, with mass internal displacement due to attacks by Fulani herdsmen on communities, particularly those living in areas close to Benue State. These include the towns and villages of Wukari, Donga, Isha-gogo, Tseke, Gidin-Dorowa, Nyimhina, Gborbegha, Borkono, Takum, Jinuwa-Nyife, Ibi and Gbogudo. There also is internal migration towards Jalingo, the Taraba State capital, where thousands of indigenous farming communities are scrambling for safety. Studies also reveal that, since 2013, communities in Southern Taraba Senatorial District and those on the fringes of the Central Senatorial District, especially in Gassol and Bali local government areas, have come under attack from the Fulani herdsmen, who have killed women and children. In Gassol local government, for instance, villages such as Borno-Kurukuru, Nyamtsav, Orga, Igbough, Tyougese, Orshio and Ukuusu have been ransacked, with farms destroyed and homes and churches burned (Adamu & Ben 2015:23).

In Nassarawa State, evidence gathered by Adamu and Ben (2015:27-28) – particularly from Yelwa Bassa of the Kokona local government area to Jangaro in Awe local government area, and

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[14] Apart from rich mineral resources, the Middle Belt is endowed with massive land and grazing activities (this explains the massive influx of people from other areas, particularly cattle-rearing Fulanis from the North, to this region (Omotoso n.d.).

[15] As a result of communal clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, Adamu and Ben (2015:20) note that there are ten different camps of internally displaced persons in the Makurdi local government area alone. At LGEA Primary School, Wurukum, Adamu and Ben discovered that there were 542 family households, with a population of 4 804 persons, sharing 12 blocks of classrooms meant to accommodate at most 50 pupils per class. What this means is that a huge population is living within the premises of the primary school. As a result, some of the deaths, particularly of vulnerable women, children and the elderly, are either unreported or not recorded.

from Assokio of the Lafia local government area to Akpanaja of the Doma local government area – attests to the fact that the conflict rocking Narasawa state has left in its wake tales of destruction, sorrow and bereavement as human lives and people's means of livelihood have been destroyed and are still being destroyed on a mass scale. For instance, the Mighili ethnic group in Duduguru was overrun by a marauding Fulani militia who killed scores of people and destroyed property worth millions of naira. The displacement of people due to the conflict between the Ombatse and Fulani herdsmen is such that socio-economic activities in the southern and central senatorial districts of Nasarawa state are largely paralysed.[16] The Nasarawa State Emergency Management Agency (NASEMA) disclosed that over 35% of villages in the affected area are displaced, 27% of the villages are living in fear and only 38% of the villages can lay claim to some stability and relative peace (Nassarawa State Emergency Management Agency, cited in Adamu & Ben 2015:28).

Divisions and conflicts caused by land ownership and boundaries are both inter- and intra-ethnic, inter- and intra-tribe, and inter- and intra-religious in the Middle Belt region. Division and conflict in the Middle Belt, however, are also fuelled by religious fanaticism; that is, religious enthusiasm or zeal that leads to marginalisation, discrimination, dehumanisation and genocide of people considered different by one religion. The next section will examine this closely.

2.4.3 RELIGIOUS FANATICISM

According to Tajudeen and Adebayo (2013:50-51), a fanatic person is one who is too enthusiastic about something. Fanaticism, therefore, can be referred to as over-enthusiasm. Simply put, a fanatic can be described as an over-enthusiastic person, one who is over-enthusiastic about his/her own religious belief/position to the point of being blinded to the views, human rights and dignity of others (Omomia 2015:60). In addition, religious fanaticism is a violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm. Usher (2012:142) points out that religious fanaticism is essentially a negative and vicious attitude to religion, characterised by exaggeration and immoderation, manipulation and exploitation, excesses and violence. In most cases, religious

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[16] The Eggon people of Nassarawa State, under the banner of Ombatse, rose in defence of the Eggon ethnic group to press for self-identity and emancipation. Ombatse is the name of a traditional religious cult, a spiritual group of the Eggon people, which was revived as a militant group, constituted to fight the Fulani herdsmen, who are committed to taking over Eggon land for the purpose of permanent settlement and grazing.

fanatics go to any diabolical lengths to perpetrate their beliefs. They describe themselves as custodians of their religion and oppose innovations. The zeal, passion and enthusiasm with which they pursue their goals makes them nothing short of fanatics. This is often demonstrated among some of the religious adherents who cut across the different religious groups in the Middle Belt region (Omomia 2015:60).

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria is torn asunder by religious fanatics, those who perpetrate acts of violent destruction against people of other religions. Such individuals are driven by the commitment that their religion must be promoted at all costs, no matter how many people may suffer or die, and no matter how much property may be destroyed. These people are drunk on an overdose of harmful doctrines and religious illiteracy, an exaggerated sense of personal correctness, distorted moral certainty, and dangerous ideological piety. They are occupied by a high inclination to marginalise, exclude and dehumanise those who are not of the same faith as them (Firman & Gila 2006:1). One need not point out specific examples of religious fanaticism in the Middle Belt region, except to say that it cuts across anyone and any religion, from the person on the street, politicians, the police, the army, religious leaders, religious scholars, traditional rulers to the international terrorist, to the leaders of the nation. These are people who are not devoted or committed to living according to the tenets and teachings of their religion. But they are zealots and committed to the use of religion for marginalisation, exclusion, fighting and destruction of human life and property.

Today, if a strong wind tears the pages of the Holy Koran apart and carries them away to Muslim-dominated areas, religious fanatics will say their holy book has been desecrated. Or, if a strong wind tears the pages of the Holy Bible apart and carries them to Christian-dominated areas, religious fanatics will say their holy book has been desecrated. The end result will be the killing of people of the opposite faith, the burning of churches, mosques, houses, shops and vehicles, and the blocking of roads. Lenshie and Inalegwu (2014:47) aptly argue that "[r]eligion has packaged the thought pattern of most Nigerians not to think outside what they believe in, and anything that appears to contradict their belief systems, they tend to oppose it vehemently, which consequently has been a major source of conflict among various religious adherents, especially Christians and Muslims in Nigeria". Such is the scenario in Nigeria and in the Middle Belt region in particular. That is, people are zealots to the point of killing and destroying in the name

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of protecting anything that has to do with their religion. No wonder stories abound of how people are stocking arms and ammunition to protect their religion.

From all indications, religious fanaticism is what makes people becomes marginalised, segregated and discriminated against to the point of committing genocide against people of the opposite faith in the Middle Belt region. Besides religious fanaticism, however, another cause of ethnic and religion divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is the elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion, which is rooted in human self-centeredness. The next section examine this closely.

2.4.4 ELITE'S MANIPULATION OF RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

The elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion is among the root causes of divisive ethnicity and religion. Stated differently, in the Middle Belt region, some people instigate the use of ethnic, tribal and religious differences to marginalise, exclude and dehumanise others. The study considers the elite to be a small minority group of people who, by their possession of social and political power, influence the majority group in society. They are a successful group of people who have risen to the top in every occupation and stratum of society. As Aghahowa and Atuanya (1996:447-484) point out, the elite are prime movers, agents and symbols of the entire common life, and the embodiment of the values that maintain society. They belong to an exclusive class from which the rest of societies are cut out. Ihonvbere (1999) says that elites not only control and dominate the commanding heights of the economy, but also exercise a legal monopoly over the means of coercion and dominance of the structures and institutions of politics and economy. They shape the ideological and philosophical direction of society. This they do easily, because materially they are empowered through their educational exposure, connections and talent (Shopeju & Ojukwu, 2010). In other words, they are a privileged minority within a larger group imbued with, or characterised by, organisational skills, leadership abilities, knowledge and information, drive and ambition. They are societal agents through which broader social forces, such as ethnicity, tribes and religion, are filtered to ordinary people. They determine the strings of character that play out in intergroup relations across every layer of society (Lenshie & Inalegwu 2014:49).

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In the Middle Belt region there are five power elites, namely the political elite, the economic elite, the traditional elite, the educated elite and, lastly, the religious elite. These elites individually and collectively have the capacity to create and determine the political atmosphere of the society to which they belong, to render it peaceful or catastrophic. They control the action of persons or groups, without the people or groups knowing the goals, purpose and method of that control, and without even being aware that a form of control is being exercised on them at all. They use their influence to mobilise and crystallise the masses into social action that often leads to division and invariably violence (Lenshie & Inalegwu 2014:49). The elite's manipulation of religion and ethnicity creates more divisions because they are at the forefront of political and economic competition, and because it is they who use ethnicity and religion to get the big things that attract attention – contracts, appointments and promotions to top positions in the public and private sectors, securing electoral victories, and so on. In addition, due to their desire for political power and governmental patronage, the elite will always instigate the masses to stave off those they perceive to constitute an obstacle to this desire. In other words, the crises and conflicts associated with divisive ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region are encouraged by the elite (Omotoso n.d.).

The elites manoeuvre their ways and pretend to be friends of some tribes, ethnic groups and religions. Sometimes they wear the garb of working for the development and progress of the groups to which they belong by ethnicity or religion, while in actual fact they are only taking care of their selfish interests. It is only when they achieve what they want that their performance, ways of life and style of living display their real colours (conning, crafty, selfish and manipulating). They manipulate and break the unity of the entire people by creating hatred based on ethnic, tribal and religious differences. They weaken the consciousness and opposition of the entire people through their selfish interests and manipulations.

For example, it is the manipulation of ethnicity and religion that makes people link failure and disqualification to marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination, not a demerit. Failure to win an election is sometimes manipulated to mean the disqualification of a tribe, ethnic or religious group, and not the disqualification of an individual. Sometimes, disqualification of employment for lack of merit may be manipulated to take the coloration of marginalising, discriminating against and excluding a tribe, ethnic group or religion. Those who could not secure admission

into institutions of learning because of a lack of basic requirements will be quick to say the institutions are marginalising, discriminating against and excluding their tribe, ethnic group or religion. A misunderstanding between two people of different tribes, ethnic groups or religions in most cases is manipulated into a fight between tribes, ethnic groups and religions. The end result is the shedding of blood and the destruction of property by two or more ethnic groups and religions.

For example, Lodiya (2010) testified that a group of people from Molding village in the Kaltungo Chiefdom ganged up to sue a family, claiming that the entire lands located in Dadiya Chiefdom were their own. Collectively, they took the case to an Upper Area Court in their own chiefdom (Kaltungo town), while the land was in Dadiya Chiefdom, Balanga LGA. The presiding judge rules in 1993 against the group from Kaltungo and gave the farmland to the family in Dadiya. After 14 years (in 2007), another group from the same Molding village in Kaltungo Chiefdom took the case of the same farmland to the same Upper Area Court that passed the judgment at Kaltungo in 1993. The presiding Upper Area Court judge discovered that the case had already been decided by a previous Judge in his court, and consequently decided that the same court could not review a case it had ruled on. This is to say, the land belonged to the family in Dadiya Chiefdom.

Thus, rather than going to a higher court to pursue their case against the Upper Area Court ruling, the Ture, Kaltungo and Shongom – all of the Kaltungo Chiefdom – decided to take the law into their hands by declaring war on the Dadiya people. Hundreds of youths from Ture, Kaltungo and Shongom, as well as hired mercenaries from Dogon Ruwa, a settler community in Kaltungo Chiefdom armed with jerry cans of petrol and dangerous weapons, invaded Dadiya village of the Lofiyo, Loyilme, Langwalak, Chinto and Lokobuwa, burning houses and killing people. The above narrative behind the communal clashes between Kaltungo and Dadiya ethnic groups in Gombe State depicts the manipulation of ethnicity and religion by the elites. The conflict, which started with two families from different ethnic groups, ended up being manipulated into tribal and ethnic conflict.

In addition, studies on Jos Plateau State's religious crisis in 2001 revealed that, what consumed a whole state and affected the whole of Nigeria, started from a misunderstanding between a few individuals. Alubo (2011:80) studied the situation and explains it thus:

> The only thoroughfare around a Mosque in Kongo/Russia – some sprawling squatter camp in Jos – had been blocked. A female Christian motorist, Rhoda Nyam was said to have insisted on passing through; the ensuing altercation assumed city-wide violence between Christians against Muslims.

This is another example of the elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion that resulted in violence and loss of lives and property. Consequently, the elites manipulate ethnicity and religion to become a hiding place and a safe haven for corrupt and bad governance. Furthermore, the manipulation of religion and ethnicity has diverted people's attention from focusing on the development of the region and the country as a whole (Musbau 2014).[17]

Besides the elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion, another cause of divisive ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region is poverty and unemployment, which are examined in the next section.

2.4.5 POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

According to Ndiyo (2008:12), "[a] concise and universally accepted definition of poverty is elusive largely because it affects many aspects (including physical, material, spiritual, moral and psychological) of the human life". Based on Ndiyo's assertion that poverty affects many aspects of human life, this study considers two aspects of poverty as the root cause of ethnic, tribal and

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[17] The manipulation of ethnicity and religion also takes place in the individual or common people arena. That is, individual actors deploy their ethnic and religious connections to pursue essentially *personal and private* goals. Many Nigerians believe that ethnic and religious affiliations are crucial to getting a job, a contract, promotion in the place of work, admission to educational institutions, playing for the national football team and so on, and will readily invoke the ethnic and religious card at the slightest opportunity. A study conducted by Osaghae in the 1990s clearly showed that individual manipulation of religion and ethnicity is quite robust, especially in the workplace and in informal sector organisations, and largely accounts for the resilience of ethnicity and religion in both the public and private sectors. There recently also has been an increase in youth ethnicity and religion along these lines, as more educated youths in urban areas have either joined or formed ethnic and religious clubs and associations to achieve some personal objectives. This has created a divisive consciousness among youths that encourages ethnic or religious loyalty and affinity more than national unity and interest (Osaghae2003:60-61).

religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region, namely spiritual and material.

2.4.5.1 SPIRITUAL POVERTY

In order to diagnose how poverty fuels ethnic and religion divisions, conflicts and violence we must consider what Myers (1999) calls the fundamental nature of poverty, that is looking at poverty from the point of relationship with God the creator. Corbett and Fikkert (2011: 56-57) state, in support of Myers's argument, that God is a relational being who has existed as three in one from all eternity. And, because human beings are made in the image of God, they are relational as well. Corbett and Fikkert further argue that God established four types of relationships for each person: a relationship with God, with the self, with others and with the rest of creation. When these relationships function properly, human beings experience fullness of life, which includes social cohesion. Searcy (2012:2) also emphasises that "spiritual poverty depicts the relationships that exist for any human being. Obviously, the most important relationship is the one with God".

Therefore, the study considers spiritual poverty as the inability of human beings to relate properly to God their creator. In other words, spiritual poverty is the breaking of the relationship with God, or not honouring Him as stipulated in the Bible (Deut. 6:5). However, for a person to honour God, the other relationships – that is with oneself, others and the rest of creation – must be approached in a godly manner as well (Matt. 22:39). Other relationships that must be given consideration include political, economic, social and religious relationships. When these relationships are not as God established them, human beings cannot use the gift of ethnic diversity and religion to promote human dignity, human wellbeing, social cohesion and a flourishing environment. Stated differently, the barbaric killing, destructions of property, hatred and all forms of dehumanisation witnessed in the Middle Belt region in the name of ethnic and religious differences stem from the inability of human beings to relate properly with God the creator. The pictures of people being slain, chopped into piece, mutilated or burned alive in the Middle Belt region have been captured by Gobodo-Madikizela (20114:162) in her description of how rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone cruelly attacked people.

They raped, murdered, indiscriminately slicing off the women's breasts and their husbands' genitals, chopping off the hands and feet of adults, children, and sometimes infants, and slashed pregnant women's stomachs with machetes in the name of ethnic or religious differences. The description as chilling as it is depicts how the inability to relate properly with God affects human treatment of one another. It is hard for one to believe human beings created in the image of God will do things like chopping, hacking, hewing and attacking fellow human beings in a barbaric manner.

The questions that keep ringing in the mind are what happened to the perpetrators' humanity that human beings could turn against their fellow human being in such a barbaric manner? How can people be able to literally stomach killing, maiming and burning their fellow human beings? How is it possible for people to return from outings to their home after destroying other people's homes? How can they embrace their wives without being haunted by their acts of killing other people's wives and husbands? How can they enjoy the company of their children after mercilessly killing other people's children? Why such inhumane acts to fellow human beings? My conclusion is that such terrible acts are a result of what the study calls spiritual poverty, which is when the human relationship with God is not the way God designed it to be, which leads to the relationship between fellow human beings being characterised by brutality, inhumaneness and wickedness. The description shows the viciousness that human beings are capable of unleashing against fellow human beings due to spiritual poverty, as illustrated in those who turned against one another, displaying the spiritual bankruptcy among the people of the Middle Belt region. Furthermore, apart from spiritual poverty, material poverty and unemployment also fuel ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region, as discussed in the next section.

2.4.5.2 MATERIAL POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region are fuelled by material poverty and unemployment. Pieterse (2001:30) defines material poverty as the "inability of individuals, households, or entire communities, to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living". The Free Dictionary (2012) pictures material poverty as "a condition in which a person or community is lacking basic needs for a minimum standard of well-being and life particularly as a result of a persistent lack of income".

Some basic needs that constitute material poverty, according to the Free Dictionary, are food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water.

The picture of material poverty in the Middle Belt region is correctly captured by Chambers's (1983:109) description of absolute poverty: The household has few assets, its house or shelter is small, made of mud or grass, and has little furniture: mats, an iron or mud bed for sleeping, perhaps an old mattress, cooking pots, a few tools. There is no toilet, or an unsanitary one, commonly called a 'pit latrine'. The household's stock and flows of food and cash are low, unreliable, seasonal and inadequate. The household is either locked into dependence on one patron, in most cases a woman, perhaps a widow or one whose husband is irresponsible, for the work to be done. Food or cash obtained meet immediate needs and is soon used up. All family members work when they can, except the very young, the very old, the disabled, and those who are seriously sick. Women work long hours, both at domestic tasks and outside the home. Returns to the family's labour are low, and in the slack seasons often very low, if indeed there is any work at all.

The International Labor Organization (ILO, 2007) defines unemployed as the numbers of the economically active population who are without work, but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (Aiyedogbon 2012:270; Akwara et al. 2013:6). Adebayo (1999) puts it that unemployment exists when the labour force wishes to work but cannot get jobs. That is when the fit and eligible individual does not have a job or work to do for some compensation (Osakwe 2013:261).

Poverty and unemployment cause a serious problem to the security of the nation. For example, lack of employment opportunities and poverty have contributed to youth involvement in the urban conflicts and militancy that confront the Nigerian nation today. The increased rate of sectarian violence, ethnic and religious militias, crime and terrorism is connected to unemployment and poverty. This means the youths make themselves available for odd jobs to stay alive, which take any imaginable criminal dimension because they cannot get clean jobs to meet basic needs (Rotimi cited in Akwara et al. 2013:3). Some researchers hold that poverty and unemployment trigger violence. For example, Awake notes that about 90% of all violence-related deaths have occurred in the world's less prosperous nations, and that the poorer

neighbourhoods of cities are often high-crime areas (Awake cited in Yusuf 2015:247). In addition, Akande and Okuwa argue that "youth's unemployment and poverty are playing a major role in African conflict experiences including Nigeria. The prevailing socio-economic environment is enticing youths to turn to war, crime and violence as a means of livelihood" (Akande & Okuwa cited in Adegoke 2015:14-15).

The most disturbing aspect in Nigeria is how unemployment and poverty are generating clusters of area boys, gangsters, thugs and associations of drug addicts. In other words, unemployment and poverty have given rise to loosely organised gangs of street children, teenagers and adults, composed mostly of males, who roam the streets of virtually every city in Nigeria. They extort money from passers-by, sell illegal drugs, perform odd jobs in return for compensation and engage in anything that brings in money. The odd jobs include killing, kidnapping and breaking into people's home. Virtually in every city and some rural areas there are too many young men hanging around, waiting for some action. All it takes is to meet them and pay them and they will do anything and one cannot blame them because they want to eat. This means the high increase in area boys and gangsters is a threat to the security of Nigeria because they are easily used as machinery for religious and ethnic conflicts. It is on record that a lot of religious and ethnic conflicts in the Middle Belt region are spearheaded by youths, who are mostly unemployed and poor. Once they are under the influence of drugs they act mercilessly, they are not afraid to die and, above all, they loot people's property in the process of fighting an ethnic or religious war (Akwara et al. 2013:3-4).

Ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region are exacerbated by the fact that the situation of unemployment and poverty has made a lot of youths vulnerable to the manipulation of the elite for selfish interests. The youths are brainwashed into engaging in the senseless killing of their fellow human beings in the name of religious and ethnic differences. Studies by ActionAid (2008:21) on the causes of conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region reveal that youths are being used to foment conflict and violence because some of them are poor, not well educated or well exposed and they indulge in all sorts of vices like drug consumption and theft. They are easily mobilised to undertake any action, particularly when they are promised remuneration. They are a vanguard of ethnic and religious manipulation. They are unemployed or underemployed; some are poorly brought up by their parents; and they are incited

by the teaching of doctrines by religious leaders who are interested in achieving their personal ambitions.

In addition, the minds of some youths in the situation of poverty have been poisoned by the elite's manipulation of religion and ethnicity that they think of the perceived other, particularly the other who is also unemployed like them, as less human and, worst of all, as something to exterminate.[18] ActionAid (2008:ix) adds that the high level of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, especially among the youth in the Middle Belt region, makes them susceptible to political manipulation. The youths have become veritable grounds for the recruitment of political thugs ready for deployment in politically motivated violent conflicts (Daniel 2014:92).[19]

In this section it has been brought to the fore what some of the reasons are behind the situation of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region. Preaching reconciliation, however, is not limited to probing reasons behind the occurrences, but includes bringing to the fore the damaging effects of conflicts and violence. This is examined in the next section.

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[18]The findings of a recent study in Plateau and Kaduna states point to the fact that the major single reason for youth involvement in violent conflicts is the high level of unemployment. For example, 40% of the sample respondents say the combined effect of unemployment, ignorance and elite manipulation have propelled the youth to be active participants in violent conflicts in the state. The youths are poor, not well educated, not well exposed and they indulge in all sorts of vices like drug consumption, rape and theft. They are easily influenced by their peers and can easily be mobilised to undertake any action particularly when they are promised remuneration …they are a vanguard of religious manipulation and many of them are fundamentalists…they are involved in conflict for survival. (Actionaid 2008:21-22).

[19] Divisions, conflict and violence in Nigeria and the Middle Belt region in particular, can also be trace back to the British Colonial Administration. The Colonial administration created a structural imbalance of regions and inequality of ethnic groups, revenue allocation, franchise and citizenship. The smaller ethnic groups were always at a disadvantageous position, at best in a subordinate position because the colonial administration placed them under the powerful and dominant ethnic groups (Daniel 2014:14-15). This means the policy of indirect rule by colonial government in Nigeria superimposed some ethnic groups rule on others, where they emerged as a superior class, a tendency which has graduated into superior-inferior complexes, prejudice and hate. This accounts for the incessant divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt area. The prominent groups that enjoyed colonial advantage and privilege and played pivotal roles in the administration were the Hausa-Fulani, the Kanuri, the Nupe, the Muslim, and Jukun within the middle-belt region of Nigeria ((Gwamna 2010:30; Akpar 2012:40).

2.5 DEPICTION OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE BELT REGION

Preaching reconciliation requires creating a desire for reconciliation. Stated differently, preaching reconciliation calls for helping the listener to see the need for reconciliation. To do that, the preacher at the onset of preaching should bring to the fore pictures of conflicts and violence within the context of preaching. As Lowry (1980:31) argues, the preacher's responsibility in the opening step of narrative preaching is to create the conflict, tension and interest so that the audience participates actively in the sermon (Je Lee 2003:73). MacClellan (1999:42) argues that the key to the introduction is to set up tension or conflict in the first two to three minutes. This tension or conflict brings to light an issue or question arising from the text and from the lives of the hearers that catches the congregation's attention. The tension in the introduction also brings to the surface a need that people in the congregation are struggling with. It should prompt in the listener the question, "Why do I need to listen to this?" In other words, it should arouse a yearning for reconciliation; the sermon's introduction therefore should help the listener to see the harm and negative effects caused by divisions, conflict and violence. This is because pictures of the damaging effects of division, conflict and violence will engage the listener in preaching reconciliation. In this regard, the damaging effects of conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria are explained.[20]

It is not an exaggeration to say the Middle Belt region of Nigeria has become a region that constantly witnesses mass graves filled with decaying corpses. Awful odours and circling vultures feasting on unattended corpses are among the recent experiences in most parts of the region. Machetes, swords and guns of varying sophistication are employed constantly (freely used) and indiscriminately on fellow human beings in the name of enemies without the slightest provocation. The region has witness people either being shot or hacked or having their throats slit in the manner of slaughtering an animal. Sometimes people are sprayed with petrol and set ablaze. The stench of burnt bodies in some places is suffocating. Places of worship, houses, shops, markets, schools and vehicles are not spared. Those who miraculously survive the ethnic

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[20] In narrative preaching the preacher begins the sermon by creating a conflict to arouse the interest of the listeners, but in preaching reconciliation the conflict is already there; the responsibility of the preacher is to present the pictures of conflict that necessitate reconciliation.

or religious violence live in perpetual fear of guerrilla attackers (Adebayo 2010:216) (see 2.4.5.1). The programmes "Watching Us Die on CNN" by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2015) and "Middle Belt not Killing Belt" by Actionaid (2008) speak volumes about the frequency, intensity and damaging effects of ethno-religious violence in the region.

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2012:54) also makes the following terrifying observation about ethnic and religious conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region.

> The frequency and intensity of violent conflict in the region have accelerated tremendously. Indiscriminate attacks on individuals, groups and communities often at night and using guerrilla tactics is very common. Indiscriminate reprisals have also occurred, which are often characterized by the blocking of roads and attacks on persons perceived to be of a different ethnic group or religion.

As a result of prevalent ethnic and religious conflicts and violence Nigeria Watch (June 2011:22) testified that "In terms of risk, i.e. rates, the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is the most dangerous region. I concur with Nigeria Watch assertion that the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is the most dangerous in terms of risk. For example, more than 400 people died in 2013 from violent inter-communal conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt states, and scores were rendered homeless from the clashes (World Report 2014). Furthermore communal violence, fueled by competition for power and access to land between nomadic pastoralists and farming communities, killed more than 1,200 people in Middle Belt region in 2014 (World Report 2015). In Agatu Benue State, Nigeria the clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen resulted to killing of people, many injured, and 2000 displaced (Vanguard, 1st March 2016). In addition, herdsmen, between Saturday and Sunday (15 and 16 October 2016), killed no fewer than 40 persons after laying siege to Godogodo, a semi-urban settlement in Jema'a Local Government Area of Kaduna State. And in what one may called reprisal action a mob in Godogodo hacked and burnt to death 14 herdsmen on 17 October 2016 (Vanguard 16 and 17 October 2016).

D.D. Dodo, a Jukun leader, summarises the situation of contentious ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria when he asserts that: "[T]he enmity between a Tiv man and Jukun can never end. Even if we meet in Heaven we will fight" (cited in Onwuzuruigbo 2010:1797).

This remark, it can be argued, reflects not only the state of Tiv/Jukun relations, but also graphically captures the state of inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, inter- and intra-tribal, and inter- and intra-religious relations in the Middle Belt region and underscores the need for preaching reconciliation in the region.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the environment of preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region. In other words, it was argued that preaching reconciliation requires the analysis of the context in which preaching take place. The chapter considered the constitution of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. In addition, it was argued that preaching reconciliation requires probing the reasons behind the conflict – how the African traditional concept of ethnicity, African traditional concept of land and boundaries, the elite's manipulation of religion and ethnic differences, religious fanaticism, and poverty and unemployment fuel ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence. The chapter also brought to the fore the need to present pictures of conflicts and violence at the onset of preaching reconciliation. In other words, it was argued that preaching reconciliation involves presenting pictures of the effects of divisions, conflicts and violence so as to create a yearning for reconciliation.

In the Middle Belt region, however, nearly every ethnic group, tribe and religion has wronged the others. Nearly every ethnic group, tribe and religion has suffered or is suffering the devastating effects of ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence. Nearly every ethnic group, tribe and religion struggles to forgive and reconcile with the others. Nearly every ethnic group, tribe and religion impulsively considers revenge as the most delicious way of response to the wrong being done. No wonder the cycle of reprisal and counter-reprisal, with oceans of blood and mountains of bones, is the testament of the region (Griswold 2009:98). In this regard, however, the study stands with Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, who says there is a need for the people of Middle Belt region of Nigeria to move to forgiveness and reconciliation, no matter how hard and difficult that may be, and no matter what it will cost, because without it there is no future (Tutu 1999:209). The question is, how may be people be guided toward the journey of forgiveness, reconciliation and social cohesion? The next chapter

examines how narrative preaching may serve as a guide for the journey of reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

Chapter 3

Techniques of Using Narratives for Preaching Reconciliation

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the study examined the context of divisive ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region. The focus of Chapter 3 is the analysis of some methods of using narratives to preach reconciliation and social cohesion. As such, the theory of narrative preaching, the efficacy of narratives for preaching reconciliation, the importance of stories in African society, narratives as a point of identification, narratives as creative imagination and narratives as sermon illustration will be considered. The aim is to examine the potential of narratives in preaching reconciliation.

Since the study considers narrative preaching as a means of guiding people on the journey of reconciliation and social cohesion, Eugene Lowry's theory of narrative preaching, called the "Lowry Loop", was adopted and will be looked at closely in the next section.

3.2 THEORY OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

This study adopts Lowry's theory of narrative preaching because it may help in guiding listeners toward the process of reconciliation. Stated differently, Lowry structured narrative preaching into five constructs, which the study believes may provide helpful ways of guiding listeners in the journey of reconciliation. In addition, Lowry's constructs of narrative preaching to a large extent is similar to Osmer's four tasks of practical theology. Lowry's five constructs, however, are reconstructed into four constructs to make them congruent with the fourfold understanding of practical theology (see section 1.4.1).

3.2.1 UPSETTING THE EQUILIBRIUM

The first construct is what Lowry calls upsetting the equilibrium, that is to create the desire of interest for the hearers the way a narrative does – to get them engaged by developing some

ambiguity that will need to be resolved or introducing some kind of conflict or tension analogous to the opening scene of a play or movie (Lowry 1980:30-31).[21] Lowry's idea of starting a sermon by creating the desire for the listener is helpful in preaching reconciliation. This means the preacher starts the sermon by presenting the listener with a picture of conflict or violence within the context of preaching (see 2.5). Cilliers (2010:93) notes that "if preachers are to connect to people, they will have to connect to the particular experiences that these people have".

Lowry's constructs of upsetting the equilibrium are more or less similar to Osmer's practical theology descriptive-empirical task (what is going on?) (Osmer 2008:34). This means that, at the onset, preaching should focus on the experiences and material of the listeners so as to make the sermon real to them. As Lowry (1997:64) argues, "[c]onversations begin not with the known, the settled, the secure, the fixed, but with the unknown, the unclear, the tenuous, and the fluid. A sense of dis-ease or wonderment will get things going-sometimes by what seems to be the smallest of issue". Preaching that speaks to particular people in the concrete circumstances of their lives must begin with an awareness of the life situations of the hearer (Long 1989:57). Stated differently, preaching reconciliation should begin by presenting the listeners with a picture of what is going on within the context of preaching. This denotes that preaching reconciliation should go beyond intuitive and imaginative thinking of the circumstances of the listeners. Just as preachers explore the meaning of scriptural texts with methods of biblical exegesis, so too they must learn to use methods for exegeting the congregation in all its sociocultural particularity (Tisdale 1997:11, 24-25).

3.2.2 DIGGING INTO AMBIGUITY

The second construct, according to Lowry, involves digging deeper into ambiguity to determine all that is really at stake or probing the causative ingredients responsible for the situation. In other words, preaching should seek reasons for the occurrences. This means that, in preaching reconciliation, the preacher analyses the discrepancy between what is and what can or ought to

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[21] The preacher's responsibility in the opening step is to create the conflict, tension and interest so that the audience participates actively in the sermon. For Lowry, a sermon introduction may upset the equilibrium of members of a congregation by means of an insignificant ambiguity that serves simply to stimulate interest in the sermonic process. This must be done in such a way as to engage the listener in the central sermon theme. The ongoing movement of the sermon is possible only when the congregation experience a sermonic itch in the opening stage (Lowry 1980:31; Je Lee 2003:73).

be. Hence, in preaching reconciliation, upsetting the equilibrium should be followed by asking slow, thoughtful why questions.

Lowry's constructs of digging into ambiguity are to a large extent similar to Osmer's interpretive task of practical theology (seeking to know why is this going on?) (Osmer 2008:82). As Lowry (1980:37) argues, all narratives to some degree move toward an ending that resolves the conflict created earlier in the story.[22] As such, probing into the causative ingredient responsible for the situation is crucial for preaching. For example, in preaching reconciliation, the preacher – through probing into causatives – may guide the listeners to know how they in one way or the other contribute to divisions, conflicts and violence. The key question in preaching reconciliation then will be, "what contributes or fuels divisions, conflicts and violence within the context of preaching?" In addition, the preacher may use stories to mirror some actions or attitudes that trigger conflict and violence.

3.2.3 EXPERIENCING THE GOSPEL

The third stage is experiencing the gospel. According to Lowry, stages one and two are intended to prepare the way so that when the gospel is then proclaimed it is effective. In other words, stages one and two aim at helping the listeners understand what the text of the Bible says, and do that which it refers (Je Lee 2003:75). This is because the ability to experience the gospel depends chiefly on the success of the analysis provided in stages one and two. Moreover, Lowry argues that it is a fatal error to announce the good news in the beginning, without using stages one and two to prepare the listeners (Je Lee 2003:75). In other words, it is only when in-depth analysis has occurred that listeners are ready to hear the good news of the gospel (Eslinger 1987:82; Je Lee 2003:75).

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[22] For Lowry, what is needed is depth of analysis, and that depth of analysis should processed a sermon shared with the congregation. The overarching purpose of the process of analysis, according to Lowry, is to arrive at an explanation of why, first the preacher in the study and then the congregation in the sermon event. When an inadequate diagnosis is used, a sermon become relatively complicated and ambiguous through which tension and interest collapse and the listener will never listen. Moreover, Lowry maintains that how diagnosis is developed in the sermon is the decisive factor to judge the quality of a sermon. Equally, when adequate analysis is maintained through the process of "whys" in the sermon, the listener remains interested and ready for the resolution to be developed (Lowry 1980:45, Je Lee 2003:74).

Lowry's construct of experiencing the gospel may be compared with Osmer's nominative task of practical theology (what ought to be going on or what does the Bible say?) (Osmer 2008:139). This is significance in preaching reconciliation, because reconciliation is the decisive activity of God, not human beings, and hence the climax of preaching reconciliation must be stage three, which is conceptualizing God's activity (Lowry 1980:69). Human response is necessary, but it does not mean that human response is posed in the centre of the sermon. What is at the centre should be the good news of what God can do, what God has done, and what God will do (Eslinger 1987:83; Je Lee 2003:76). For example, change of thoughts, change of action, confession of the evil done or proposed to do, and forgiveness, which are key ingredients for reconciliation, are all embedded in the word of God.

3.2.4 ANTICIPATING THE CONSEQUENCES OF EMBRACING THE GOSPEL

The fourth and final stage of preaching reconciliation is the anticipation of the consequences of embracing the gospel in the sermon. In the sermon itself, treatment has not only begun, but has made health a possibility. The hearers must decide for themselves what difference the gospel will make in their lives. In this final stage, the preacher does not exhort the congregation to live out the gospel in a specific way, but invites an authentic response (Lowry 1980:28-73; 1997:62-89).

Lowry's construct of anticipation of the consequences of embracing the gospel is similar to Osmer's pragmatic task of practical theology. In other words, preaching reconciliation and social cohesion demands giving practical steps that may help people to have a change of thought toward the perceived enemy, a change of action toward the enemy, and forgiveness or confession of the evil done or proposed to do. What is more, it is important to help people acquire the ability and the willingness to live together and work towards the future together.

Before delving into the techniques of using narratives for preaching reconciliation, the study considers the importance of narratives for preaching reconciliation in the next section.

3.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF USING NARRATIVES FOR PREACHING RECONCILIATION

Firstly, the study considers some relevant definitions of narratives. For example, Deuel (1992:275) defines narrative as "an account of events and participants moving over time and

space, a recital with beginning and ending patterned by the narrator's principle of selection". In other words, narratives tell a story about something that happened, beginning with a point of tension and leading up to the acceptable or unacceptable resolution of that tension (Larsen 1995:ix). Powell (1990:23) posits that a "narrative may be defined as any work of literature that tells a story". Polak (cited in Amit 2001:46) elaborates more on the definition of narratives:

> A story relates what is happening to people, and describes objects, places, and events. However, not every description is necessarily a story. What makes a description into a story is a significant change: a bad situation is improved (for instance, when one of the characters overcomes a rival or a difficult obstacle); a situation which was good at the outset grows markedly worse (for instance, due to a failure, or being hurt by a rival). In a story, the main thing is the change, the event which makes the reader feel that something has occurred.

Stated differently, the narrative is a series of events related to one another in such a way as to evidence a plot (Lowry cited in Holbert 2010:16). In a narrative, argues Delorme (2005:1096), there are series of utterances with a beginning and endpoint, the whole story that is being told, and the narration that is implied between two points, and also between the narrator, who is the organiser of the message, and the narratee, who is the potential receiver of the message. Therefore, the study considers the following as the purpose of using narratives for preaching reconciliation.

3.3.1 NARRATIVES LURE LISTENERS ALONG A JOURNEY OF EXPLORATION

This study considers narratives as a good technique for preaching reconciliation because, through narratives, listeners are lured along a journey of exploration and surprise with real-life stories and questions to the place where they can exclaim, "Aha! I get it!" at the end of the sermon (Craddock cited in Long 2009:3). In other words, narrative preaching enables people to hear the music of their triumphs, failures, frustrations and despair in the quest to make the world more human (Chinuachibe cited in Ayindo et al. 2001:3). This is because, in narrative preaching, the preacher uses stories to weave the fabric of human situations so that life is shaped, transformed or takes on new meaning.

3.3.2 NARRATIVE INFLUENCES HUMAN BEINGS' EVERYDAY LIFE

In addition, narrative influences human beings' everyday life and therefore will be a good technique for promoting reconciliation. As Saenz (2014:16) says, "the narrative form is one of the best ways to influence human experience with God's message, because the narrative is paradigmatic, i.e. a typical example, a pattern or model of human everyday life". This means narrative is one of the ways humankind mirrors life within the context of the world (Scheub 1998:21). Lowry (1985:39) argues appropriately that "[w]e dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative". So, by means of the narrative, the preacher has the opportunity to influence human experience in order to change people's lives with God's message.

3.3.3 NARRATIVES MAKE CHARACTERS AVAILABLE FOR LISTENERS TO WORK ON THEIR CHARACTER

Another fundamental reason for considering narratives as a good technique for preaching reconciliation is that narrative focuses on how stories work to make characters available as resources that listeners use to engage in the work of their own character (Frank 2010:30). Humankind easily recognises itself in narratives and imagines itself changed through narrative. Sauder (2009:45-46) says narrative moves the heart and touches the human soul: listeners participate, connecting their experience with the story that is being told, finding a new perspective on their lives, new insights into the text and new understandings of the world. Sauder further argues that, long after people have forgotten the rest of a sermon, they can still recall the stories. It is the stories people remember, connect with, and take home. It is the stories and images they refer to for a long time. Stated differently, narratives impact thoughts and emotions as listeners identify with characters' experiences and realise that their own experience is not unique or impossible to change in a way that does not happen in other means of preaching (Robinson 1990:2; Mayaba & Wood 2015:14).

3.3.4 NARRATIVE SITUATES LISTENERS IN THEIR WORLD

In the narrative, the preacher situates the listener in his or her world. In other words, through the use of narratives, the preacher contextualises the message in the situation of the audience by

attracting the hearer into the story and from there impacts the listener's life (Saenz 2014:17). This means narrative provides a culturally relevant means of sharing the message with power and clarity. Long (2009:25) says, "[i]f preaching is a sacramental meeting place between the church and the word, the hearer and the gospel, then the substance of preaching is shaped by scripture and by human experience under the sign of grace, and both of these aspects call for narration."

This study considers narrative a good technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. To place the study in context, however, the importance of stories in African societies will be considered.

3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES AND STORYTELLING IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Human beings are storytellers by nature. The meal is over and plates have been pushed aside, but the people remain around the table, telling stories. A family has gathered for a funeral, and a flood of stories flows, about the one whose life they remember, whose absence they mourn. People tell stories to share the events of the day with those they love, to spend companionable time with their children at bedtime, and to pass on family history. People swap stories at the food store and on the front porch. People retell the well-worn stories one more time, as good friends and family members listen patiently. Stories shape human lives (Sauder 2009:44).

3.4.1 STORIES IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Stories are used in African cultures to pass on the traditions and beliefs of a particular society from one generation to the next. They have also been used as a means of passing on codes of behaviour, as well as maintaining social order. Mayaba and Wood (2015:13) add that "[f]olktales have also been found to teach resilient values and attitudes and can positively influence how people view in their current situations." Because of the influence of stories on African people, children of the Ewe people of Ghana are simply not considered educated unless they have heard many times the *gliwo*, animal stories that are intended to teach basic lessons in obedience, kindness, courage, honesty and other virtues through indirect example. The Shinqiti people of Mauritania have a cycle of folktales especially for children that consist of episodes in the life of an imaginary woman, each one of which implies a moral or a virtue that is supposed to be absorbed by the young in an entertaining fashion. For the Xhosa and Zulu people of South

Africa, the story is the same, because it is assumed that an accepted part of social life for children is not only listening to stories, but also learning to perform them so that when they become parents and grandparents, they will be able to tell their children. For many ethnic groups and tribes of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, children, youths, men and women gather in a large room to tell and listen to stories. The stories are usually folktales with moral lessons for people to learn at the end of the story (Pellowski 1977:45-47).

Significant to the study, however, is how African folk art or indigenous stories may be used alongside biblical stories to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in Africa. Stated differently, African folk arts or indigenous stories and cultural practices have the potential to support biblical stories to promote reconciliation and encourage the listener to live a harmonious life with others. Therefore, in the African folk story below, the study identifies some themes that may be used together with biblical stories for preaching reconciliation and a harmonious life in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The story depicts the reconciliation of different tribal, ethnic and religious groups on the basis of building a common future.

After ceaseless quarrels which caused them to fight one against the other, all the animals, those of the village and those of the bush, all animals, large and small, those who live in the village, in the bush or in trees, in holes and in the water, those who fly, who run, who go about on two or four legs, those who crawl, those who were crippled, those who were victims of the ferocity of their fellow animals or the blows of Man; in short, all those which life opposed gathered together. They signed a peace treaty, to cease fighting and killing one another and to seal their reconciliation permanently. It was also agreed that from now on all must live together and be united against their common enemy Man. Messengers were sent out, to broadcast the good news everywhere. Reconciliation and harmony would certainly be born, live and go from this moment on.

In addition, the story portrays a flourishing atmosphere of social cohesion in which people use their talents for the benefit of humankind, irrespective of tribal, ethnic or religious group.

After the reconciliation the dance started, led by fascinating music. The musicians were: a monkey, a hare with long ears, a porcupine with his body armed with prickles, a jackal with a

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long muzzle, along with other virtuosos playing, one on the tam-tam, one on the xylophone, one on the flute. Each competed to be considered the most skilful musician.

Soon, the fever of the moment grew and filled the crowd. The ostrich, the giraffe, the horse, all excellent dancers, had great success. As for the enormous horse, that genius of the African rivers (I speak of the hippopotamus, that dreadful mastodon badly cut out of his pattern with scissors by Mother Nature), did not spare anything to entertain the audience with his buffooneries.

The story also brings to the fore the coming together, staying and working together of extreme enemies depicted in the dance.

After several other dancers had danced in the middle, the Billy Goat dizzily jumped into the circle and, by his clumsiness, caused a certain amount of disorder. The hyena also went to join the goat and both danced to the admiration of the cheering crowd. The leopard also jumped into the dancing ring and dances alongside the goat and the hyena. The wolf and the lamb entertained the crowd as they compete to show how they are skilful dancers.

(The story is drawn from the book *Paroles d'hier et d'aujourd'hui: Ainsi parliament nos ancêtres*)

3.4.2 STORYTELLERS IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

African storytellers use stories to maintain social order and to teach resilient values and attitudes that positively influence how people view their situations. African storytellers string stories together from African people's experience: struggles with the land and the elements, movements and migrations, wars between kingdoms, conflicts over pastures and waterholes, and wrestling with the mysteries of existence, life and death. Also, African storytellers compose stories through long reflection on the relations among humans, between man and woman, between humankind and the animal world; responses to the challenges of the unknown, and to the universal need to create order and reason out of chaos (Courlander 1975:5).

There are similarities between storytelling in Africa and narrative preaching. For example, both involve the use of stories to influence the listener. Geisler (1997:2) says, "[s]torytelling is relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice and gesture. The storyteller looks into the

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eyes of the audience and together they compose the tale". This means African storytellers do not just tell stories, but they use gestures and actions that elicit emotions and affect the listener. In the same manner, narrative preaching sometimes uses stories in a manner that moves and carries the listeners along as the preacher preaches.

In addition, narrative preaching in the African context depicts the preacher in the position of the storyteller. This is because the idea of a preacher being seen as a storyteller is very significant to the context in which professional storytelling is no longer commonly practised among the people of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. In other words, children or family do not gather in a house to tell and listened to stories. Moreover, people in a community, and even some from neighbouring communities, do not gather in the house of a great storyteller to listen to stories. Nowadays, the majority of people in the Middle Belt region gather in churches every Sunday and sometimes during the week for worship. And one of the key aspects of worship is preaching. The influence of preaching in the worship service will make narrative preaching a good technique for promoting reconciliation in a context in which people cherish storytelling. The next section examines narrative preaching.

3.5 REFLECTIONS ON NARRATIVE PREACHING

Narrative preaching was born out of a desire to make the word of God relevant to a particular people in a particular place and time. In other words, narrative preaching came into being as a result of the campaign by some homileticians that preaching should focus on the experience of the listener. For instance, Craddock (1971:61-62) stresses that the experience and material of the listeners are the substance of the sermon and, when focused upon, the sermon will be real to the listeners. This means that particular concrete experiences are an ingredient in preaching; not just in the introduction to solicit interest, but throughout the sermon.[23] For a sermon to be relevant

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[23] In support of the idea that preaching should start with the situation of the listener, Craddock maintains that it is quite typical of the Bible to address particular situations and not worry about harmonising each message with all its other messages on that topic. In the Old Testament there are vigorous opposition to kingship, as well as proud proclamations of the coronation of the king as God's Son. There is broad sympathies of the stories of Ruth and Jonah, but also the solid nationalism of Haggai and Malachi. The New Testament can urge one group to become as little children and another to quit being children, without feeling it must harmonise the two into one harmless and helpless exhortation. Jesus can command one candidate for discipleship to leave all other responsibilities immediately, and instruct another to sit down and first count the cost. The Bible speaks to particular human

and transforming it must start with people's needs. If preaching does not start with people's needs it will not truly touch hearers' lives. Therefore the next section takes a look at how narrative preaching was born out of the emphasis that preaching should focus on the experience of listeners.

3.5.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

The historical overview of narrative preaching is relevant to the study because the use of narrative preaching for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region is born out of the desire to make the word of God relevant to people in a situation where ethnic and religious differences are used to marginalise, discriminate against and dehumanise one another. This is more or less the same with the necessity that brought about the emergence of narrative preaching – it was a quest to make the word of God relevant to the situation of the listeners. For example, Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote an article for *Harper's Magazine* in 1928, entitled "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" He answered the question by saying the problem with most preaching is that it is boring. Fosdick's major contribution was that sermons should solve the problems of the hearers – that is social, moral, psychological, theological and existential problems of importance. This means for the sermon to be relevant and transforming it must start with people's needs. For Fosdick, if preaching does truly touch hearers' lives, it will be anything but boring (Allen 2010:4).

Another homiletical voice that foreshadowed elements of the narrative preaching was that of R.E.C. Browne. According to Allen (2010:4-5) in 1958, Browne published *Ministry of the Word*, in which he argued that the gospel should not be reduced to formulae, by which he meant predetermined propositions and structures of sermons (such as three-point or expository forms). Instead, the sermon must authentically and artistically grow out of the character of the person preaching and relate to the form of revelation represented in the biblical text being preached. In summary, Browne's argument is that preaching should be more artistic poetry than philosophical prose. H. Grady Davis's *Design for Preaching* also appeared in 1958. Davis argued that "[a] sermon should be like a tree", that is, a sermon should have one sturdy idea like the trunk, deep

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situations and does not have homogenised treatments of the themes of Biblical Theology: Kingdom, Salvation, Eschaton (Craddock 1978:67-68).

roots of research and reflection that are never seen, and branches that thrust out from the central trunk that bear fruit and blossoms appropriate to that tree alone. So, the sermon's content determines the appropriate form, rather than the form determining how the content must be presented (Davis cited in Allen 2010:5). What follows is a discussion of some of the people who pioneered narrative preaching.

3.5.1.1 PREACHING AS SHARED STORY

The real active change toward narrative preaching began in 1980 with Rice, who co-authored a textbook with Edmund Steimle and Morris Neidenthal entitled *Preaching the Story* (Steimle et al. 1980). In this book, the authors assert that the task of the preacher is to bring together in the sermon – in a way that is meaningful to the hearers and faithful to the tradition – the biblical story, the congregation's story, the preacher's personal story, and the world's story.

> When we speak of preaching as shared story, we are not proposing the telling of stories which could hide our real lives or which would substitute for the biblical story. We are not talking about fairy tales, canned anecdotes, or snappy sermon-starters. Far from it. Sermon as shared story makes a place for each of our stories to make contact with and be integrated into the stories of the Bible and of other people (Steimle et al. 1980:34).

A key exegetical and homiletical principle for this approach is that *story interprets the story*. In this sense, preaching itself is storytelling. It is not, however, just stringing together entertaining illustrations. It is the laying bare of these four stories side by side, overlapping their edges so that at times they sing together in harmony and at other times they enter into a shouting match filled with dissonance, but they always interpret each other and those gathered for worship.

3.5.1.2 INDUCTIVE PREACHING

Besides Steimle et al., another and perhaps the greatest advocate of making the word of God relevant to the situation of the listener is Fred B. Craddock. According to Campbell (1997:126), "Craddock's exploration of the method the 'how' – of the sermon has been a creative and positive contribution to Christian preaching. His work unquestionably breathed new life back into the practice of preaching and discipline of homiletics at a time when the pulpit was in

woeful shape". Craddock's strong case for the inductive method of preaching was when his work *As One Without Authority* was published (1971). *As One Without Authority* was followed by *Overhearing the Gospel* (1978) and *Preaching* (1985). The result of these works has led to Craddock commonly being associated with inductive preaching in the contemporary homiletical literature (Venter & Bang 2005:82). In Craddock's judgment, the traditional, deductive sermonic movement has a weakness in that it does not invite listener participation. For, in the deductive movement, the audience can simply be a passive receiver who accepts the right or authority of the speaker to state conclusions (Craddock 1971:54). In the relationship between preacher and hearer, there is no democracy, no dialogue, no listening by the speaker, no contributing by the hearer. If the congregation is on the team, it is as javelin catcher (Craddock 1971:55 Je Lee 2003:49).

Unlike deductive movement that ignores the hearer's participation, inductive movement demands the involvement of the listeners. Drawing on the New Hermeneutic and the literary study of Jesus' parables, Craddock asserts that preaching should move from the particulars of experience to a general truth. The preacher is no longer a dictator, but someone who shares the Gospel. He or she provides the listener with the freedom to complete the sermon (Craddock 1971:64). The inductive movement pictured preaching as a trip on which the preacher and congregation travel together toward an eagerly anticipated destination (Je Lee 2003:49-50).[24] Elsewhere, Craddock (1985:98) has emphasised that giving disciplined time and attention to the interpretation of one's listeners is critical for preaching. Indeed, in reality, a preacher does not study the text alone, but rather studies the text from the perspective of the congregation's situation, bringing the congregation's circumstances to bear upon the understanding of the text and its message for them (Craddock 1981:126; Venter & Bang 2005:88).

3.5.1.3 NARRATIVE PREACHING

Eugene L. Lowry's work is in some way an extension of the trajectories that began with Charles Rice and Fred Craddock. In his 1980 book, *The Homiletical Plot*, Lowry takes inductive movement and storytelling and shapes it into a concrete sermonic form. Campbell (1997:138)

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[24] Craddock argues that, if the inductive process is done well, hearers will be led to finish the sermon by drawing the conclusion for themselves and determining how it should be applied to their particular lives.

notes that "[n]o one has done more to highlight the role of narrative in preaching than Eugene Lowry. His three books, The Homiletical Plot, Doing Time in the Pulpit, and How to Preach a Parable, represent some of the interesting reflection to date on narrative preaching and there is no question that many of his insights about the temporal character of preaching and structure of sermon can be immense importance to contemporary preachers". Lowry argues that all sermons should take on a narrative structure. This is not to say that every sermon should be a story, but that, like all narratives, the sermon must move from conflict to resolution, or from itch to scratch. The specific construct he uses to unpack this narrative structure has become known as the Lowry Loop. The first move is to create the itch for the hearers the way a narrative does – to get them engaged by developing some ambiguity that will need to be resolved. Lowry calls this upsetting the equilibrium. The second stage involves digging deeper into ambiguity to determine all that is really at stake. Here the preacher and congregation analyse the discrepancy between what is and what can or ought to be. This stage asks a slow, thoughtful *Why?* in the face of the itch created at the beginning of the sermon. All narratives to some degree move toward an ending that resolves the conflict created earlier in the story. The third stage of a narrative sermon, therefore, discloses the clue to that resolution without giving it away all at once. To be effective, the preacher must offer the congregation an experience of reversal at this point. There must be an "Oh, I get it". This revelatory moment in the sermon leads the hearers to an experience in which the radical discontinuity between the world's way of thinking and the gospel is seen and felt. So, in the fourth stage of the narrative sermon, Lowry moves from diagnosis to treatment. Here, listeners hear the good news proclaimed explicitly and find that the gospel is continuous with human experience, as long as human experience has been turned upside down. The final stage of the narrative sermon that flows out of experiencing the gospel in the sermon is the anticipation of the consequences of embracing the gospel in the future – once the speaking of the sermon is done. In the sermon itself, treatment has only begun, it has only made health a possibility. The hearers must decide for themselves what difference the gospel will make in their lives. In this final stage, the preacher does not exhort the congregation to live out the gospel in a specific way, but invites an authentic response.

3.5.1.4 PREACHING AS MOVEMENT OF THOUGHTS

Whereas the other works discussed present a singular theoretical perspective, Buttrick presents two key theoretical pieces mixed in with a lot of theological observations and homiletical advice. His starting point is the same as all the others: he rejects the dominant homiletical approach of distilling propositions from Scripture regardless of the form of the text. He desires a homiletical method that better reflects the literary study of the Bible, especially the recognition that biblical narratives are movements of episodic thought (Buttrick 1987:23).

In other words, while all the scholars we have examined make a turn toward the individual hearer, Buttrick, based on insights drawn from communication studies, focuses on how a *community* of listeners can be moved along to hear the same sermon in the same basic way. The subtitle of the book *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, published in 1987, names the two primary ways the preacher can create such a communal hearing. Buttrick rejects the use of "points", but is very much interested in the way sermons offer the congregation a number of ideas, or language modules. These ideas are not static, but are movements of thought similar to the way different ideas move through a conversation. A conversation between two people moves with a rapid exchange of shifting ideas. But a sermonic conversation with a community of hearers must move much more slowly and deliberately and shift between ideas more carefully. The modern attention span is limited to three to four minutes, but it takes three to four minutes to embed a movement of thought in a whole community's consciousness. So the preacher must shape a move very carefully.

The move should open with a statement of the idea. Actually, the idea should be stated three times, but the repetition is formed differently each time so that the community is not aware of the repetition, even as it begins to embed the idea in the community's consciousness. Then the idea is developed through association or dissociation through the use of a central image. Finally, closure is brought to the move through the restatement of the idea. This type of structure allows the hearers to understand, assimilate and remember the move as the preacher shifts to the next move. Different from Craddock's journey or Lowry's narrative plot, Buttrick does not think the preacher should develop smooth transitions between these moves so much as keeping them

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separate by placing them side by side in progression so that the logical connection between the ideas is clear (Buttrick 1987:23-27)

3.5.2 THE CRITICISM OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

There has been a lot criticism since the inception of narrative preaching. As Long (2009:8-10) would say, there are critics of narrative preaching from the theological right, the theological middle and the theological left. For example, from the theological right, Long observed that evangelicals are always nervous that story preaching is too soft, too doctrinally unclear, too ethically ambiguous, and too shy about evangelism. From the theological middle, Long argues that story sermons depend largely upon evocation; they blow narrative breath on the coals of latent knowledge and convictions, and they function best among people who have been taught well. But in a culture in which those memories, convictions and churchly patterns are not there to evoke and revivify, narrative preaching can end up being like a massage at a spa, a pleasurable aesthetic experience without content or goal.

Another charge against narrative preaching from the theological middle, according to Long, is Charles L. Campbell's criticism that a good bit of what passes for narrative preaching has been fastened to the wrong narratives; that is, it consists of superficial anecdotes of human experience or alleged plot structures in the imagination, rather than the gospel narratives. Campbell claims that what is important for Christian preaching is not stories in general or even homiletical plots, but rather a specific story that renders the identity of a particular person; preaching in which Jesus is not the subject of his own predicates comes in for critique. Long maintain that critics from the theological left allege that practitioners of narrative preaching are not merely rhetorically mistaken, theologically weak and trendy, but they have committed the far more serious offenses of potential oppression and abuse of power. Narrative preachers commit these crimes by speaking from and to the common life experiences of the hearers (Long 2009:8-10).

Each of the careful critiques of narrative preaching has made significant points. Yet each critique comes down to the misuse of stories rather than a generalised claim that stories have no place in sermons at all. Each problem mentioned has appeared, and continues to appear, in pulpits in many churches. But despite the important analyses that critics offers, narrative preaching can still find a significant role in preaching. What is needed now is a careful enumeration of just how

narrative preaching can work, avoiding the important critiques and demonstrating, by judicious example, the potential power and possibilities locked into the stories of the Scripture. The work of enumerating how narrative preaching can work is the focus of the study on how narratives may be used to engage with societal ills in Africa, and in Nigeria in particular (Holbert 2010:28).

Over the years, students of homiletics advocated for the use of narrative preaching in different contexts. The next section will examine this closely.

3.5.3 THE USED OF NARRATIVE PREACHING IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS

The importance of narrative preaching cannot be overemphasised. For example, aptly told stories do not simply make sermons interesting, touching or emotionally powerful, but make theological sense out of events and experiences of our lives (Long called this principle "dress rehearsing"). In addition, narratives are pathways that beckon readers and hearers on a journey of suspense and discovery. Especially when it comes to biblical stories, the process of traveling down the narrative corridors can be a faith-forming adventure. Narratives are also the means by which people remember the lost and silenced. The ethics of pulpit storytelling calls on people to add to the church's canon and to keep alive in the church's memory the stories of those whose lives are not remembered and celebrated and truthfully narrated elsewhere (Long 2009:18-26). The fact is that narratives are important for preaching, therefore there have been various approaches to narrative preaching by students of homiletics.

3.5.3.1 NARRATIVE PREACHING AS MECHANISM FOR PROMOTING HOLINESS OF HEART AND LIFE

MacClellan's study of narrative preaching focuses on how biblical narratives may be used to promote holiness of heart and life. His study was aimed at addressing a situation where people claim the name Christian yet live lives unrelated and contrary to the principles and guidelines of Scripture and command of Jesus Christ. The observation was within the First United Methodist Church, Auburndale, Florida, USA. He argued that, though the body of Christ is present, the actions, words, and behaviour of its people are unrelated to the identity of who Christ calls them to be. That is, moral relativism reigns, whereby the dominant assumption is that what I want to do and what I feel like is what I should do. Feelings have replaced God and God's Word as a moral guide (MacClellan 1999:1-2).

As such, MacClellan considers narrative preaching as a way of combating the abovementioned abnormality among members of his congregation. According to him, what makes narrative preaching effective in the development of holiness of heart and life is that people today need stories of collective history and exemplary individuals as models. Biblical narratives are those stories of the community of faith which tell Christians who they are, who God is, and what God calls the Christian community to be. He further argues that narrative constitutes one of the first and most durable strategies human beings employ for the creation and shaping of experience. Our sense of identity and identification, our horizons of personal and collective meaning, and the convictional bases of our faith arise in the telling of our religious and cultural stories. These narratives, when presented in language and metaphors people understand and relate to, can stimulate moral growth (MacClellan 1999:36).

In addition, MacClellan argues that narrative preaching has the potential to promote holiness of heart and life because an effective biblical narrative sermon captures people's imagination, swoops them up and carries them into the drama of the biblical scene, placing them in the sandals of the characters. However, drawing people into the narrative is not an end in itself. The purpose of the narrative form is to transform the life of the hearer(s). Biblical narrative preaching becomes the conduit to experiencing God personally (MacClellan 1999:37).

3.5.3.2 NARRATIVE PREACHING AS STIMULANT OF LISTENER IMAGINATION

Booysen's study focuses on the use of narrative preaching as a response to the problem that words in preaching have lost their meaning in an age of visual arts. He argues that people nowadays do not remember the sermon. To support his point, Booysen undertook a study of how listeners recall sermons and discovered that 60% of listeners follow the sermon, but only 22% remember it adequately and 43% have a very weak recollection of the sermon. Only one out of every five people can remember the theme of the sermon. Tests show that every fifth word is not heard and a standardised open space is left. Further tests have shown that 40 to 50% of the sermon is forgotten after 24 hours. Likewise, only 39% out of 105 sermons under survey were actuality type sermons and only 38.1% of sermons address the actual experience of the listener. This made Booysen conclude that, in most cases, the listener feels a sense of alienation during preaching (Booysen 2001:12)

Therefore Booysen's study on narrative preaching deals with how elements of "imagery" may be used as a remedy for the abovementioned problem. With narrative preaching as context and as model, Booysen holds onto the conviction that imagery in narrative preaching stimulates the imagination of the listener. It also causes the listener to think with the communicator and aids the listener to visualise the sermon. More so, a better understanding and memory of the sermon are established in the mind of the listener through imagery. Imagery assists in the organisation of the listener's receptivity around sight and object, rather than sound and person. Imagery assists in achieving maximum possible participation by giving the listeners something to think about, feel, decide and do as they listen to the sermon. In this way, imagery helps resolve the crisis between eye and ear because it helps the listener reflect on other meanings imbued in the image, and entices the listener to dialogue with meaning, hopefully resulting in a better understanding of the communication (Booysen 2001:18-19).

3.5.3.3 NARRATIVE PREACHING AS ADDITIONAL HOMILETIC REPERTOIRE

Saenz's study was prompted by little or no use of narrative preaching among biblical preachers in Peru. As a preacher in Peru, he encountered the problem of not considering the literary form of the text. In other words, Saenz observed that many preachers in Peru appreciate the literary genre while studying and interpreting a narrative text, but when they preach this is ignored. Most of the sermon outlines in his observations are structured in the form of propositional and argumentative preaching. He further observed that, in Peru, Biblical narratives frequently are used only with children in Sunday school. Many churches teach Bible stories to children while the adults study Paul's epistles (Saenz 2014:13-14). This motivated him to undertake a study of biblical narratives in order to use them in his biblical preaching and, at the same time, encourage Peruvian ministers to add narrative preaching to their homiletic repertoire.

Saenz's approach to narrative preaching is bibliographic and field research. The bibliographic aspect investigated three things, namely: the opinions of ten academics about the Joseph story, a close reading of Gen 44:18-34 and 45:1-8, and a literary analysis of Genesis 44:18-34 and 45:1-8. The field research, however, was done through focus groups with some Peruvian church ministers in order to obtain Peruvian contextualised material for the sermon. The field research aimed at providing the practical and contextual basis of preaching a narrative sermon. So the sermon is the result of both bibliographic and field research.

3.5.3.4 THE PRESENT STUDY

Therefore, the focus of this study is on how narrative preaching may be used to engage the societal ills in Africa and in Nigeria in particular. That is, it examines the application of narrative preaching in combating the challenge of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. For, in narrative preaching, theology is joined to human experience. This means the goal of narrative preaching is to influence people's lives with God's message (Saenz 2014:16).

The works of the people under review are quite remarkable and even provided the roadmap for the study. But, human effort in every endeavour is limited in time and space. The works of these great homileticians under review, although noteworthy in explaining what narrative preaching is, are limited in application. By this I mean their works on narrative preaching are general in terms of what narrative preaching is all about, but are lacking in how narrative preaching may be applied to a particular real-life situation. For instance, how can narrative preaching be used in a context of injustice, poverty, conflict and violence and all forms of societal ills? They are absent in how narrative preaching can be applied to societal ills in the discourse of narrative preaching, which necessitated the study on how narrative preaching may be used to promote social cohesion in the context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence.

The study considers the use of narrative preaching as a technique for confronting societal ills that is not only relevant, but a necessity to the church in Africa and in Nigeria in particular. That is, to a context in which tribal, ethnic and religious differences are mobilised to segregate, marginalise and exclude others. In addition, it is a context in which stories are used to pass on traditions, values, morality and all forms of societal norms from one generation to the other. As a matter of fact, narrative preaching fits the Middle Belt region because typical Africans are constitutionally incapable of speaking in any mode other than narrative. If you ask them for the time, they will tell how they acquired the watch. To any factual question they can only reply, "That reminds me of a story" (Lischer 2005:94-95). This indicates that narrative preaching may be a good technique for preaching reconciliation.

The narrative preaching that the study proposes is a sermon that has a homiletical plot, regardless of whether it uses inductive or deductive reasoning or stories to be effective. The major interest

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is in how a sermon becomes what Lowry calls "an event-in-time – existing in time, not space – a process and not a collection of parts" (Lowry cited in Je Lee 2003:68-69). As a process of building a sermon to be an event-in-time, the sermon should be shaped in a manner that it may stimulate and sustain the attention of the audience throughout the whole process of the sermon.

In narrative preaching, however, the use of stories to enable point of identification by the listeners is very apt for preaching reconciliation. The next section will examine this closely.

3.6 NARRATIVES AS POINT OF IDENTIFICATION

Narrative as a technique for preaching reconciliation requires the use of stories to establish a point of identification. In other words, a narrative preaching of reconciliation involves constructing the sermon to enable hearers to identify with the story or characters. In this regard, MacClellan (1999:47) aptly argues that the task in narrative preaching is to let listeners see the biblical personages for who they really are in all of their complexity so that listeners may see themselves more clearly. Schlafer (1992:79) also adds that, "[i]f a point of identification can be established with characters who are engaged in realistic interaction, there is a possibility that such identification can have the effect of reshaping the life-stories of those who hear the story in the sermon".[25] This means the sermon should be constructed in a manner to invite listeners to identify with the characters or a particular character in the narrative (see 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.5.4 and 4.5.5). As Craddock (1985:162) would say, "The key to holding interest and making an impact upon an audience lies in the identification of audience with characters and the critical portrayal of events."

3.6.1 HOW STORIES CREATE POINTS OF IDENTIFICATION

Identification with characters in narrative preaching occurs in the following ways:

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[25] Narrative creating means of establishing a point of identification not only informs, but enables movement from chaos to order, bondage to deliverance, rebellion to obedience, accusation to vindication, despair to hope, guilt to justification, debt to forgiveness, separation to reconciliation, wrath to love, judgment to righteousness. It moves its hearers from defeat to victory, death to life, betrayal to restoration, embattled to victory, old creation to new, blindness to spiritual sight, moral darkness to light, hostility toward humankind and God to reconciliation, sorrow to joy, and filth to cleansing, self-righteousness to the righteousness of God, alienation to fellowship with God and humankind. Narratives change people, address and re-create persons, heads, and minds (Concoran 2007:42).

3.6.1.1 ASSOCIATION WITH THE CHARACTER

Identification with characters in narrative preaching occurs through intuitive association with the character. In other words, the use of stories in preaching creates identification that enables the listener to say, "I am like that". As Long (1989:75) says, the listener intuits that a character is in important respects like himself or herself. The character is perceived to be one who shares an adaptation and lifestyle similar to the listener's, so that the listener in the literary sense becomes the character.

Identification with characters in narrative preaching through intuitive association with the character is very relevant to preaching reconciliation. This is because attitudes like selfishness, which manifests in the elites' manipulation of the tribal, ethnic and religious differences to discriminate, marginalise and segregate people, requires the use of stories that may stimulate willing association with characters to be identified (see 2.4.4). Stated differently, stories may easily make people willingly accept the fact that they are selfish or self-centred. What is more, when a story with the attitude of self-centeredness is portrayed, individuals, people, ethnic and religious groups may be helped to realise or accept the fact that they are in one way or the other excluding, marginalising or maltreating other people.

Furthermore, identification with a character in narrative preaching through intuitive association with the character may help people to see that egocentrism is a vice that is causing a lot of conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. In other words, stories might help people realise that it is egocentrism when a particular tribe or ethnic group claims ownership of the land, a region, places and, in some cases, churches (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Stories may help people to realise that it is egocentrism when certain tribes or ethnic groups consider themselves superior to others, who are inferior. In addition, stories may help people acknowledge that it is egocentrism for some tribes or ethnic groups to claim ownership of political positions and jobs opportunities.

3.6.1.2 CHARACTER BECOMES A MODEL OR IDEAL EXAMPLE

In addition, identification with characters in narrative preaching occurs through making characters model an ideal example to emulate. Stated differently, the use of stories in preaching creates attraction that enables the listener to say, "I want to be like that". In this regard, Long (1989:75-76) argues that the function of stories in preaching sometimes is to create the desire to

be like characters in the story. For example, the Bible gives stories of faith, hope, courage, reconciliation, and characters worthy of emulation.

Identification with characters in narrative preaching through making characters model an ideal example to emulate is relevant for narrative preaching of reconciliation in the Middle Belt region. This is because issues like changing attitudes toward perceived enemies, particularly in an environment of division, conflict and violence, requires models to emulate. In addition, forgiveness is humanly hard and difficult, especially to those who have suffered all forms of maltreatment at the hands of others. Walter Wink (1998:14) captures the usual feeling toward a perceived enemy in the following words: "wanting to burn them with acid, dismember them with an ax, submit them to the same sadistic rituals to which they subject one". But the use of stories that create attraction for forgiveness may enable people say: "I will like to forgive as that person forgave." In addition, making warring parties stay together and work together after many years of strife and separation calls for stories for them to emulate. Stated differently, the use of stories as model for people to emulate may defuse ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence and guide people to envision changing their attitude toward their enemies, forgive those who wrong them and live together. In addition, the use of stories as an ideal example to follow may help people to do things that are humanly difficult without accusing the preacher of being presumptuous and indifferent (Tutu 1999:216).

3.6.1.3 CHARACTERS CONFIRM OR CHALLENGE WORLDVIEW

Finally, identification with characters in narrative preaching occurs through confirming to or challenging the listener's worldview. In other words, the use of stories in preaching stimulates self-evaluation that enables the listener say: "That's how I see the world." Long puts it that stories sometimes create their impact not by asking listeners to see themselves as one of the characters, but by declaring "this is how the world really is'", and demand a response from the listener to the question, is it true or not? Sometimes a story confirms a listener's worldview, but on other occasions it challenges that world. The question is, how does the story help the listener see the world? This means stories shape lives and define people's identity. New stories either confirm or challenge their worldview, and the listeners have to choose in which world they will live (Long 1989:76; Booysen 2001:94-95).

Identification with characters in narrative preaching, especially through challenging the listener's worldview, is relevant to the narrative preaching of reconciliation in the Middle Belt region. This is because stories may be used to challenge people's actions, like calling some people foreigners or strangers, and the attitudes of religious fanaticism that cause pain and trauma to other people (see 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). What is more, stories may help people, particularly the elites, understand and be convinced that their activities of creating division, conflict and violence are responsible in one way or another for the perpetual sorrows and woes of other people (see 2.4.4). In other words, the use of stories in preaching may enable people of the Middle Belt region to see the realities of the pain and sorrow and the devastating effects of division, conflict and violence (Long 2009:18). The use of stories to establish a point of identification may enable people to mirror their contribution toward the divisions, conflicts and violence and also be guided to desist from doing things that bring sorrow and pain to others. In addition, using stories as a point of identification is a strategy that may help people believe that they are using ethnicity and religion to deprive other people of their human rights and human dignity. Through stories, people may be helped to know that their attitudes of marginalisation and exclusion have deprived other people of their human rights and dignity (see 4.5.5).

3.6.2 HOW TO CREATE A POINT OF IDENTIFICATION IN NARRATIVE PREACHING

This study considers the following principles to be helpful ways of using stories to establishing a point of identification for preaching reconciliation (Craddock 1985:162-165).

3.6.2.1 SERMON MATERIAL PRESENTED WITH GENUINE INSIGHT INTO THE CONTEXT OF THE LISTENER

Firstly, for effective identification, the story is to be presented with genuine insight into the context of the listener. Stated differently, establishing a point of identification requires a good understanding of the context of preaching. Cilliers (2004:144) maintains that the "targeting of the congregation and its own context implies that preaching attains a unique, relevant character. The congregation brings the wider context, the socio-economic, political, ecological and ethical, within which preaching takes place". This means that a proper understanding of the context guides the preacher to know the sermon materials to use for preaching. For example, genuine insight into the context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence will enable

the preacher to use biblical and non-biblical stories that may engage listeners in a realistic interaction with the characters and human behaviour in the sermon.

3.6.2.2 SERMON MATERIAL FOCUSES ON A SPECIFIC ACTION

Secondly, for effective identification, the story in a sermon should focus on a specific and particular action, rather than be general. In other words, effective identification with character in narrative preaching of reconciliation requires targeting specific and particular actions that will promote reconciliation to enable the listeners to identify with a specific character's action in the story (Craddock 1985:163). When the sermon is focused and specific, some characters are loved and idealised whereas others are hated with a passion. In identifying with the trials and tribulations, the joy and love of the characters, the listener experiences solidarity with them that enables him/her to say: "I'm like that" or "I wish I could be like that" or "I do not wish to be like that" (Long 1989:75) or "What must we do?" (Miller (1992:110). For example, to make the sermon relevant in preaching reconciliation, stories that mirror the effect of divisions, conflicts and violence should be used. Actions like jealousy, favouritism, and self-centeredness that contribute in one way or the other to escalating conflict should be a mirror (see 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.5.3, and 4.5.4). What is more, actions that promote reconciliation and a harmonious life should be brought to the fore. That is, actions like forgiveness that probe human behaviour or relationships and spur reconciliation may make hearers say: "Yes, this is really the way it is" (Craddock 1985:163) (see 5.5.1, 5.5.2 and 5.5.3).

3.6.2.3 SERMON MATERIALS REALISTIC TO THE AUDIENCE

Thirdly, for an effective identification, sermon materials should be realistic to the audience. In other words, narrative preaching of reconciliation requires that the stories in the sermon should be in a manner that the listeners may identify, see themselves in, the persons, the attitudes, or actions that fuel or contribute to conflict and violence or the action that promotes reconciliation (Craddock 1985:164) (see 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3 and 5.5.4). This means the sermon preparation should work at presenting a story that captures the listeners' full attention and that may enable them to identify with the characters in the story.

For example, stories that portray attitudes like favouritism that manifest in the kinship and blood group used to polarise and segregate people may help listeners to identify with or see themselves

in the story (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). Stories may help people to realise how favouritism fuels conflict and violence. In other words, through the use of stories the people of the Middle Belt region may come to know that peace will not be found in a place where people are not treated on merit, but based on where they come from and their religious affiliation. Furthermore, stories may help people to understand that there will be no peace in a place where people are judged not by the content of their character, but by tribe, ethnic and religious group affiliation. As a matter of fact, stories may help to mirror the consequences of favouritism (see 4.5.3.)

3.6.2.4 SERMON MATERIAL CREATES EMPATHETIC IMAGINATION

Finally, for effective identification, the sermon materials should create empathetic imagination in the listeners. In this regard, Craddock emphasises that preachers should learn empathetic imagination as one of the most important skills. That is, the capacity to achieve a large measure of understanding of another person without having had the person's experience (Craddock 1985:95; Je Lee 2003:53-54). Stated differently, the use of empathetic imagination in preaching reconciliation means the preacher uses stories to warn listeners about the devastating effects of conflict and violence. The description by Michael Skoler, an American radio journalist, of how over two thousand Christians were killed in a church by fellow Christians in Rwanda depicts the study's understanding of empathetic imagination in preaching reconciliation:

As I drove up to a set of orange brick church buildings, I had to clamp a bandana tightly over my nose and mouth. The stench was unbearable. Outside the church, there are maybe two or three dozen bodies, and in the heat in Rwanda, many of the bodies are already almost fully decomposed. You can see some skulls, some backbones. There are what seem to be women in brightly colored clothing, as well as children, lying about. ... There are bodies scattered all over the church. The blood on the floor is so thick it's dried to kind of a muddy brown dust that may be in some places a quarter of an inch thick. Most of the bodies are blackened and decomposing. Some lie on mattresses, some on the floor, some are covered with blankets. By the altar, there are probably about 30 bodies clustered around. One is the body of an infant with parents... There's a suitcase that is open and kind of torn apart in front of the altar. On the floor of the church, you can see baskets, plastic water cans, pales, combs, brushes, sandals, sneakers, tins of food, a bottle of talcum powder. The windows, stained-glass windows on either side, are broken. There are wooden pews that have been thrown against them. Above the whole scene, above the

altar, is a small wooden statue of Christ with one hand raised. In one of the church offices in the back, the bodies are piled, one on top of the other crowded into a room, some still sitting in chairs. Windows were broken, the plaster inside is cratered. It looks like, perhaps, bullets came in through the windows (Michael Skoler, cited in Krivoushin 2014:3-4).[26]

The aim of the story is to help listeners disengage from actions or attitudes that will lead to the devastating occurrences portrayed in the story. That is, the stories should enable listeners to say, "I don't want that to happen to me or we don't want that to happen to us".

Besides the use of stories to establish identification in preaching reconciliation, stories may also be used to shape people's imagination. The next section will examine this closely.

3.7 NARRATIVES AS MECHANISM FOR SHAPING IMAGINATION

Due to the complexity of reconciliation, instruction alone can never lead people through the process of reconciliation. As a result, preaching reconciliation requires the use of imageries to reframe, re-imagine and re-describe the world so as to offer a counter-narrative to that rendered by division, conflict and violence (Day, Astley & Francis 2005:152). In other words, the narrative preaching of reconciliation requires the use of stories, metaphors and images that are the product of creative imagination to shape the imagination of listeners. Buttrick (1987:32) says that preaching without depiction is apt to be abstract, and oddly enough unconvincing. The preacher has to find a way of picturing what he or she is talking about. This means preaching reconciliation involves the use of evocative images rather than conceptual structures (Craddock 1971:77). For example, making people change their attitudes toward a perceived enemy requires depiction. In addition, asking people to forgive in a situation of deep wounds created by divisions, conflicts and violence calls for the use of evocative images. What is more, telling the warring parties, be they of different family, tribe, ethnic group or religion, to come together, stay together and grow together in a situation of division, conflict and violence requires the use of pictures.

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[26] The Rwandans made a decision to keep a number of the genocide sites exactly as they were. As a result, Father Michael Lapsley testified that, four years after the genocide, he witnessed a sickening piles of skeletal human remains often surrounded by a tangle of clothing that had been worn by the victims. What seemed particularly horrific was that large numbers of people were killed on the alters of churches. As a Christian, the reality that the genocide happened in churches was totally confronting to my faith (Lapsley & Karakashian 2012:209-210).

3.7.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMAGINATION FOR PREACHING RECONCILIATION

According to Troeger (2007:60), "[i]magination is the ability to create and hold before the mind's eye an image of something that is not actually present". Taylor (1993:213) argues further that "Imagination is the ability to form images in the minds of listeners that are not physically present to their senses so that they find themselves in a wider world with new choices about who and how they will be". In addition, Chifungo (2013:139) maintains that "[i]magination is to work through images, metaphors, and narratives in such a way that it evokes, generates and constructs alternative worlds that lie beyond the fixed tradition". This means imagination is bringing into being in the mind of the listener images that have clarity and force sufficient to effect changes in attitudes, values, beliefs and life directions (Craddock 1971:92). Storytelling, retelling, parables, allegories, similes, metaphors, and proverbs could be used in preaching to create pictures of how listeners could be different.

Therefore, images are important for preaching reconciliation because reconciliation is a matter of imaginative discernment of the truth through stories, in addition to logical discernment (Wilson 1993:145). In other words, cultivating images through narratives is a great modality of promoting reconciliation, because to conquer the minds of people in an environment of division, conflict and violence is very difficult. It is easier to target the heart and the sensibility of people, which can be done through the use of imagery created by narratives. This is because thoughts of the heart provide images, which means the heart is the seat of imagination (Wallace 1995:30). Craddock (1971:78) aptly argues that, "[l]ong after a man's head has consented to the preacher's idea, the old images may still hang in the heart. But until that image is replaced is he really a changed man".[27]

In addition, preaching reconciliation requires imagination because conflict and violence create images that may block information from penetrating the mind of the listeners. This is why

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[27] The human mind operates in images or metaphors, not abstract concepts or arguments, which is why preaching reconciliation requires preachers to be like poets and creative writers, who are interested not in saying things as accurately as possible, but by touching the human heart and letting the human imagination work in creative, analogical ways. Craddock (1971:59) aptly argues that "images are replaced not by concepts but by other images" in which the listener becomes a changed man, although it requires a lot of time, for "the longest trip a person takes is that from the head to heart". Also, for Craddock, this change by images starts with the preacher and then proceeds to the congregation (Je Lee 2003:50).

Cilliers (2013:6) advises that preaching, and preaching reconciliation in particular, should go beyond communication of mere information about God to others; rather, it should convey the picture of the performance of God's action in the midst of incomprehension and deafness of ears. Preaching reconciliation should be much more than the transfer of religious information, and also much more than mere words on a written manuscript. Rather, it should include images drawn from the biblical text or from contemporary life – images that appeal to the senses and engage the hearer through sight, sound, touch, taste or smell (Tisdale 2010:71). Moreover, Booysen (2001:111) aptly argues that "[i]mages are replaced but only by other images, not by concepts. The preacher who understands the impact of images to replace images will know that it is the way to influence man and society".

3.7.2 HOW TO USE IMAGINATION FOR PREACHING

This study considers the following principles as helpful ways of using images for the narrative preaching of reconciliation.

3.7.2.1 IMAGES DRAWN FROM THE WORLD OF EXPERIENCE KNOWN TO THE HEARERS

First, it is important that the selection of images should be drawn from the world of experience known to the hearers. Stated differently, the use of imageries to shape the imagination of listeners requires that the images should be cast in forms recognisable and real to them. Craddock (1971:59) notes that the immediate and concrete experiences of the people are significant ingredients in the formation and movement of the imagination in preaching. For example, biblical stories of reconciliation may help to shape people's imagination about reconciliation, because Christian imagination is fundamentally illuminated by the Scriptures (see 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3 and 5.4). As preachers turn to the Bible, they do not seek information but look for images that arouse the imagination of the listeners about reconciliation.[28]

In addition, images from African indigenous stories or folk art that portray reconciliation may touch the heart and stir many souls to action, because they are drawn from African people's

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[28] Put in other words, using the biblical stories helps to replace old, life-denying images in the head with life-affirming images in the heart (Craddock, cited in Wilson 1988:21).

experience: struggles with the land and the elements, movements and migrations, wars between kingdoms, and conflicts over pastures and waterholes (Courlander 1975:5, Wilson 1988:18) (see 3.3).

The *Bassa* ethnic group of Liberia in West Africa has a ceremony for reconciliation that demonstrates how some African cultural practices of reconciliation could be a good resource for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. The cultural practice of the *Bassa* ethnic group displays an image of confession of the evil done in the past and forgiveness as a necessary ingredient for reconciliation.

During a ceremony of reconciliation, the perpetrator ties a string of palm leaves on the neck, kneels before the victim and hands the end of the string to the victim. Then the perpetrator will say to the victim, "I have wronged you and this community in a shameful way. You deserve to do whatever you wish with me. I am giving you one end of the rope tied around my neck. You can choose to drag me to death or release me of the burden of guilt and shame." After this statement, the place will be silent, waiting for the answer of the victim. When the victim accepts the apology he will accept the string, remove it from the neck of the perpetrator, and help him to stand up on his feet. The entire community shouts with joy when the ceremony ends this way. Immediately, celebrations begin and an animal is killed, cooked, and eaten by all in the community. If the answer is to seek revenge, the victim will refuse to accept the string or remove it from the neck of the victim. When the ceremony fails in this way, both the victim and the perpetrator become a disgrace to the community. However, the elders do not give up. They continue with the dialogue and the ceremony is postponed for another date (Ayindo et al. 2001:69).

3.7.2.2 THE IMAGE MUST BE SPECIFIC AND HAVE CONCRETE RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSES

The second principle of using images is that the image used should be specific and have concrete relationships and responses. In other words, to shape the imagination of listeners, the image conveyed should be one that can be heard, seen, smelled, touched or tasted by the listeners. Schlafer (1992:64) says that, if preachers want to help listeners see, hear, taste, touch, smell, understand and interact with the sermon, their best bet is to take as a point of departure images and action that are specific and concrete to the hearers. For example, through the work of the

imagination, biblical stories may help people to interpret the situation and to project new ways of being in the world (see 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3 and 5.4). The imaginative ways of being in the world subsequently create a difference of opinion between the reality of the text and the reality of the reader, which opens up the possibility for the destabilisation of the status quo as one lives out the proposed reality of the text (Clawson 2013:303). This means a sermon on reconciliation will require using stories that re-create the image of a particular reconciliation for preaching (Craddock 1971:93).[29]

The African folk story below is a good example of a story that may help shape people's imagination about forgiveness devoid of confession of evil done in the past and forgiveness based on building a common future.

A long time ago at the village of Serki a woman gave birth to twins – both boys. They were very nice children. One of the twins, Eiba by name, had a white spot on his right hand. The other one – they called him Saiba – had two white spots on his left hand. Father and mother were very happy and very sad at the same time. You will ask – why? There was a very bad custom in Serki to kill twins. And the chief of Serki said, "Those twins must die, too." But their father and mother did not want to kill the twins. "What?" said the chief angrily? "You don't want to kill them? Go away from the village and never come back or I shall kill you together with your children."

So the poor family went away from the village and for many years they lived in a forest. Life was not easy there. But the children grew up strong. When they grew up, they helped their father and mother with their work. They were good and handsome young men.

But as the story continues, the twins are depicted as focusing not on how the king and the people of Serki treated them and their parent. They did not consider the suffering they and their parent went through as a result of the treatment meted out to them by the people of Serki. Rather, they focused on the immediate need, which was saving the life of the people of Serki from an

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[29] Models of the processes of reconciliation offer listeners help in imagining how they might live harmoniously with one another, despite tribal, ethnic and religious difference. For example, in places like South Africa and Rwanda, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions offer a good model of reconciliation. By using this model for preaching, listeners will gain concrete pictures of what reconciliation looks like (Wink 1998:13, Osmer 2008:152).

attacking enemy. That is, the focus of their forgiveness was on the survival of the people of Serki in the midst of a war that was at the point of consuming them.

One day the twins found a man in the forest. He was dying. They tried to help him. But he said, "Don't help me. I shall die soon. I came from Serki. There is a war going on there now. We fought bravely. But the enemy is stronger than we are. Go and help my people if you can." With these words, he died.

Eiba and Saiba wanted to go to Serki and help to fight. But their father and mother were against it and said, "The Chief does not want you there. He wanted to kill you when you were small children. That's why we went away from Serki and came to live in the forest."

But the twins wanted to go and help Serki. They said, "This is our country. We must help the people of our country." So the boys came to Serki and fought against the enemies. They fought bravely. The people of that country won the fight and made the enemy run. So the war was over.

Their action displays forgiveness without confession of the evil done in the past. Furthermore, the forgiveness displayed by the twins is devoid of recounting the suffering they went through in the past. Therefore their action saved the people of Serki from enemies, provoked the confession of the evil done in the past and put an end to the killing of twins in the land of Serki.

Then a feast at the chief's house began. Saiba and Eiba were at the feast, too. Then one of the men stood up and said, "There are two young men here, two brothers. I think they are very brave soldiers. But we don't know who they are." The twins' uncle was at the feast, too. He said to the chief, "Do you remember two little twins – one with a spot on his right hand and the other with two spots on his left hand? Eighteen years ago you told their father and mother to go away from our village as they did not want to kill the twins. These are the same twins."

The chief stood up and asked the twins to forgive him. Then he sent the two young men back to their father and mother with many presents and a letter in which he asked them to come back. From that day on they stopped killing twins in Serki. (English for Students: African Folk Tales).

3.7.2.3 AVOID SELF-CONSCIOUS INTERRUPTIONS IN NARRATION

A third guiding principle for conveying images to others is to avoid all self-conscious interruptions in narration and description (Craddock 1971:93). In other words, the preacher should avoid introducing a story with overt exaggeration, like, "Let me tell you about one of the finest, noblest and the most generous, the great etc.". In addition, preachers should also desist from a summary application, such as: "Now aren't we all sometimes like that older brother?" It may be better to let the narrative and the dialogue unveils the heart (Tucker 2005:3). This is because listeners are engaged in an imaginative act of listening, taking sermons and refiguring them in their minds, creating a new world out of the image conveyed in the sermon (Long 2005:38). Moreover, Craddock (1979:77-78) aptly points out that "[i]magination is fundamental to all thinking from the level of critical reasoning to reverie and daydreaming. Problem-solving of all types, in the laboratory, in the kitchen, on a battlefield or in the boardroom places a great burden upon the image-making faculty of the mind".[30] This denotes that humankind is created with the ability to imagine and create a new world out of an image conveyed to them. The task of preaching and preachers is to use stories to introduce to the mind of the listener an image, and the listener will imagine and form the world with the image.

Therefore, the narrative function is to create a picture in the mind's eye of people to imagine the life in the story to a point where they can say, I want to be like that or I don't want to be like that. In this regard, Long (2009:24) aptly points out that "[n]arratives do more than please us aesthetically or express powerful emotions. They can gather up the bits and pieces of life and configure and refigure them into a meaningful world of action and purpose".

Besides the use of stories for shaping imagination, stories also function as sermon illustrations in preaching reconciliation. The next section examines this closely.

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[30] There are many ways preachers ruin images in a sermon. One way is imposing a storyline on the focal point of the image by relating too many intrusive details of the image. Another way is deflecting the listener's attention from the image by the preacher's intrusive presence in the sermon. Furthermore, an attempt to add moral or practical advice to the story empties the image of its magic and robs it of its epiphany-like character (Lischer 2005:112-113).

3.8 NARRATIVES AS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

Preaching, and preaching reconciliation in particular, demands the use of stories as sermon illustrations. According to Hostetler (1989:12), the word "illustrates" derives from the Latin verb, "illustrate," meaning to light up or illuminate. Galli and Larson (1994:71) note that illustration puts light, colour and excitement into a sermon. In other words, sermon illustration is the material that casts light upon explanation and/or application in the sermon. Illustration has direct reference to explanation and application, and indirect reference to the biblical text and the congregation (Fasol 1985:28). Hostetler (1989:16) defines sermon illustration in a precise manner as "[s]peaking words in a sermon which substantiate, amplify, explain, or add emotional proof to the points of the sermon".[31] Charles Haddon Spurgeon uses the image of a window to describe illustration, that is illustrations in preaching are like windows – they let light into the mind. In addition, Spurgeon also calls sermon illustrations fish hooks, because they stick in the soul of the listener like hooks in a fish's mouth (Spurgeon, cited in Hostetler 1989:12).

Some of the ingredients that can be used for sermon illustration are stories, poems, a real-life happening, a reference to current events, a quotation aptly put, a citation from a novel or anything that helps to light up an aspect of the sermon (Daane 1980:75). It is a known fact that division, conflict and violence create sorrow and pain, hurt, unbearable burdens, shatter experience, crush hopes, and cause terrors of spirit. Such wounds are humanly difficult to heal lightly, but through the help of simple and sufficiently sermon illustrations, people may be guided in the process of healing, invariably leading to reconciliation. The following are some principles of using illustration for preaching reconciliation.

3.8.1 SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS MAKE THE MESSAGE CLEAR

Sermon illustrations should be used in a manner that makes the message of reconciliation clear. That is, illustration ought to throw truth into the picture and make listener say with a smile, "we've got it" (Sangster 1946:6). Preaching in an environment of conflict and warring is very complex and difficult. Sometimes sorrow, pain, hurt, shattering experiences and crushed hopes

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[31] Preaching deals with abstractions and generalization. As such sermon illustration is an attempt to move preaching from the realm of abstractions and generalizations to the level of the particular and familiar (Hostetler 1989:12).

blur listeners' understanding of the ingredients of reconciliation, like a confession of the evil done or proposed to do, forgiveness, change of thought and acts of compassion toward an enemy. The preacher therefore should use illustrations to demonstrate these key ingredients of reconciliation.

3.8.2 SERMON ILLUSTRATION SPARKS INTEREST IN THE LISTENER

Sermon illustration should spark interest in the listener. Fasol (1985:28) argues that "the chief value of sermon illustration is to add appeal to the sermon, to paint pictures to help the congregation see the truth, to help the sermon come alive". Sometimes preaching reconciliation can be dull because it does not appeal to the listeners' minds, which are already clouded with revenge. For example, it is always difficult to get the attention of people who are in pain from losing loved ones, property and even parts of their bodies with a message of reconciliation. As such, the preacher should look for illustration materials that will interest the listener and thereby stimulate a desire for reconciliation and social cohesion.

3.8.3 SERMON ILLUSTRATION SHOULD BE PERSUASIVE

Sermon illustration should be persuasive, that is the material for illustration should move people to thinking and taking a step toward reconciliation. Preaching reconciliation demands persuasion, because the human desire for revenge makes people reluctant about reconciliation. Therefore, at any level of persuasion, illustration is the preacher's help. That is, the use of a picture to clarify thought, or a story that touches the emotions, is necessary against a resisting will. Sangster (1946:6) argues that people may evade the point of an argument by refusing to follow it. But a picture placard before their eyes is not easily avoided. This is because illustration slips under people's guard against listening and concentration, and all mechanism against listening.

3.8.4 SERMON ILLUSTRATION ENABLES THE REPETITION OF THE MESSAGE

Sermon illustration should enable the repetition of the message of reconciliation without weariness. That is, sermon illustration helps the preacher to keep preaching the same message without it appearing to be the same (Sangster 1946:6). Since reconciliation is a process rather than an occasion, the repetition of the message in preaching reconciliation become necessary so as to lead the listener through the reconciliation process. As a matter of fact, preaching

reconciliation demands recapitulation and even duplication of sermons, because it more or less guides the listener through the healing process. As such, sermon illustration is a chief means to this end. Baumann (1972:171) argues that illustration makes replaying and repetition of the sermon possible without weariness. Hence, if properly used, sermon illustration makes a sermon of reconciliation to be a replayed and restated from various angles that make a fresh impression and offer conviction beyond resistance.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In the chapter it has been argued that narrative should be considered as a technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because, through narratives, listeners are attracted to join a journey of exploration with real-life stories to the place where they could exclaim, "Aha! I get it!" at the end of the sermon. In addition, narratives influence human beings' everyday life. That is, narrative is the way humankind imagines life within the context of their world. Narratives also make characters available as resources that listeners use to engage with the work of their character. And, through narratives, the preacher situates the listener in his or her world that contextualises the message in the situation of the audience.

In addition, the narrative is considered as a good technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because stories are used in African culture to pass on the traditions and beliefs of a particular society from one generation to the next. They have also been used to pass on codes of behaviour and social values, as to maintain social order. African folktales positively influence how people mirror their situation and teach values and attitudes. What is more, narratives are a good technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because stories enable hearers to identify with the characters in the story. Narratives invite the listener to identify with the story or with a particular character in the story.

Furthermore, it is argued that preaching reconciliation requires shaping imagination, because conflict and violence create images that may block information from penetrating the mind of the listeners. This is why preaching reconciliation should go beyond the communication of mere information about God to others; rather, it should convey the picture of the performance of God's action in the midst of incomprehension and deafness of ears. That is, preaching reconciliation

should include images drawn from the biblical text or from contemporary life. Images should appeal to the senses and engage the hearer through sight, sound, touch, taste or smell.

It is humanly difficult not to consider revenge concerning the evil that has been done in the past. It is humanly difficult to forgive evil done in the past. It is humanly difficult to accept, live with, walk with and grow together with those who have wronged one in the past. As such, the study considers the used of sermon illustrations as a mechanism that may help in giving people models of ingredients for reconciliation. That is, stories are models that may help people show compassion instead of revenge to those who wronged them in the past, and models for forgiveness without demanding for repentance or confession of the evil done in the past. They also are models for accepting, living with, walking with, and growing with those who wronged one in the past – and these should be demonstrated with stories.

In the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, however, it can be argued that ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence are rooted in these dynamics. God gave humankind the gift of ethnic diversity and religion but a human attempt to use these gifts for selfish purposes ends up in conflict and violence. The same occurrences can be seen in the narrative of Genesis 37-50, an invariably patriarchal narrative. Gordon (1992:423) says the dynamics of the narrative of Genesis 37-50, an invariably patriarchal narrative, may be expressed by the following formula: human attempts to frustrate God's plan bring about division and conflict. This means that God promised land, descendants and greatness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but a human attempt – either to use initiative to fulfil the promise or attempt to frustrate the promise – results in division, conflict and violence. Therefore, the next chapter will examine how the portrayal of characters in the conflict found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may serve as a framework for preaching reconciliation in the context of ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

Chapter 4

Themes for Preaching Reconciliation in the Narratives of Genesis 37-50

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the methods of using narratives to combat the challenge of ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. This chapter will identify some possible themes from the biblical texts of Genesis 37-50 that potentially could be helpful in preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Themes like defamation of character, egocentrism, favouritism, dehumanisation and pain and trauma will be covered in the chapter. These themes emerge from the careful study of the way the characters are portrayed in these texts. The aim is to examine how the portrayal of characters in the conflict found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may serve as a framework for preaching reconciliation in the context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

To place the study in context, a brief conceptual understanding of the nature of biblical narratives will be considered before delving into the story of Joseph and his brothers.

4.2 NARRATIVES IN THE BIBLE

According to Long (2009:10-11), the scriptures begin not with a set of principles or proverbs, but with the voice of a narrator, a storyteller: For example, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:1-2). Long argues further that the scripture ends with a worshipful cry for the story of God to move to the next dramatic chapter: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!' (Revelation 22:20). In addition, MacClellan argues that, even in places where God speaks, and gives laws, ordinances and commands, these laws, ordinances and commands receive meaning and reason through narrative. For example, in Deuteronomy 6, Moses is said to explain to the children of Israel,

> When your sons ask you in time to come, "What is the meaning of the testimonies
> and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded

you?" then you shall say to your son, "We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and

the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand … (Deuteronomy 6:20-21).

This means narrative explains the meaning behind God's commandments. It gives credence to and cause for a response to God's ordinances and commandments (MacClellan 1999:31-32).

Furthermore, narratives in the Scriptures depict God directly as a character in the person of God. There also are other stories that recount individual lives in their fullness, including the interaction between God and individuals and stories of communities and nations. The common element in these stories is the narrative form, which organises incidents and details along with a sequential setting, links incidents to form a plot, and establishes movement toward a perceptible ending. A biblical narrative also intertwines plot and character in such a fashion that actions reveal character and character advance plot (Robinson 2003:689). This means that, in biblical narratives, the stories are artistically arranged in a way that the event moves or ascends to a level of tension called the climax, and then descends to a level called resolution. Usually, the resolution is about change – positive or negative, good or bad.

Significance to the study, however, is that the biblical narratives have the ability to draw their listeners into the drama, passion, and power of God's plan and purpose for God's creation. That is, the biblical narrative has the power to confront, change, form and make people new. For example, MacClellan argues that foundational questions like, "What is the meaning of life?"; "Who am I?"; "Where did I come from?"; "What is my purpose in life?"; "Why is life so difficult?"; "Where did evil and sin come from?" are all questions that have been addressed through the use of narratives. Also, issues like conflict and reconciliation are aptly pictured in the form of narratives. This means biblical narratives embody the meaning of life and give hope for the future (MacClellan 1999:31-32).

This study, however, focuses specifically on the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, found in Genesis 37-50. Furthermore, this chapter will dwell mostly on the level of conflict or tension in the story of Joseph and his brothers.

Before exploring the story of Joseph and his brothers, the study will look briefly at the literary context of the narrative, and this will be considered closely in the next section.

4.3 THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50

Genesis 12 to 50 reveal how the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is connected with God's promise to Abraham. As they stand, the stories trace the call of Abraham to the movement of Jacob's family from Canaan to Egypt. This means the story of Joseph and his brothers is a constituent part of the stories of the patriarchs, which are covered in Genesis 12 through 50. In other words, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers falls under the ancestral narratives, which consist of a four-generation account of the origins of the community that became Israel; that is, people like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, and Joseph and his brothers (Westermann 1996:ix; Brueggemann 2003:43; Stanley 2010:217-218).

In addition, the starting point of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, and customarily the patriarchal narratives, is the summoning of Abraham by God in Genesis 12:1-3. Brueggemann (2003:45) further writes that "the call of Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 is the beginning point of the ancestral narratives". This means the call of Abraham by God is not only the opening of the Abraham story, but the origin of the patriarchal narratives. The calling contains three main elements – a promise of becoming a great nation, a command to go to an unnamed land and a command to be a means of blessing to others (Genesis 12:1-3). These elements of nationhood, land and blessing provide the context for the plot of the whole ancestral story (Turner 2009:58-59).

As one reads through the story, however, God particularises the promises in other new ways in Genesis 15 and 17. That is, the promise focuses less on land and more on Abraham as a progenitor of a multitude of nations and kings, and also involves a promise to Sarah (Fretheim 1994:457). This means the promise is formalised into a covenant promise that runs through the patriarchal narratives. In other words, the covenant and the promise of being elected offspring span throughout the patriarchal narratives, to Abraham's son and grandsons (Genesis 26:1-6; 28:13-15). As one reads through the patriarchal stories, this covenant and the promise are renewed in every generation of the patriarchs. In this regard, Goldingay (1980:22) argues that:

> It is possible, then, to read through the patriarchal narratives as a whole and perceive one clear theme linking them. The theme is explicit in the actual words of God which promise blessing, land, increase, and influence. These explicit

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words then form the key which explains the function in their context of the stories which make up the bulk of the narratives as a whole.

Basically, every aspect of the patriarchal narratives revolves around the covenant and the promise. This is because, as one reads through Genesis 12 to 50, the major themes one perceives in the patriarchal narratives are that Yahweh reaffirms to Abraham's son and grandson his undertaking to bless Abraham with descendants and land and to make him a means of blessing to others. This theme holds the patriarchal narratives together by constituting both a cord running through them and the key motif to which the individual scenes relate (Goldingay 1980:20). Virtually all the plots of the ancestral narrative are about how the covenant and the promise are renewed or fulfilled from one generation of the ancestors to the next.

 Before the call, Abraham had no child (Genesis 11:30) but, as the story continues, Isaac is introduced, then Jacob, and finally Joseph and his brothers, thus demonstrating the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. In this regard, Segal (1967:28) argues that "the chief subject of Genesis is the story of the covenant with the first of the patriarchs, Abraham (Gen. 15, 18), which was confirmed to his successors, Isaac (Gen. 26, 3-4), and Jacob". The motif behind the patriarchal narratives is to show how Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, called and promised Abraham and also how the promise is renewed and fulfilled through Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers.

In particular, the Joseph narrative reveals how God's promise to Abraham is growing to fulfilment, especially the promise of the great nation. Constable (2014:246) maintains that "the Joseph story … develops the theme of the Pentateuch by showing the gradual fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham in 12:1-3. In particular, it shows how God blesses the nations through the descendants of Abraham".[32] In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is the last story in the cycle of the stories of the patriarchs, which represents the transition from family history to national history (Westermann 1996:ix). It also represents the moment in which the family widens its scope and exposes itself to the larger world.

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[32] The motif behind the patriarchal narratives can be summarised as being that of a single childless couple who are blessed by the primordial care of God; consequently, by Genesis 46:26, sixty-six persons belonging to the family went to Egypt.

However, the fulfilment of the promises of the gift of land and elected offspring to Abraham brings about family conflict in the patriarchal narrative in Genesis 12 to 50. Virtually every family of patriarchs has a record of conflict and, in the case of the Joseph narratives, of conflict and violence among brothers. The next section will entail a closer examination of this.

4.4 DIVISIONS AND CONFLICTS IN THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers continues from and develops the story of Jacob and his family tree in Genesis 12-36. It is a story filled with conflicting relationships (Fretheim 1994:593). The plots of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers and invariably the patriarchal narratives depict conflict, and central to the conflicts is who will be progenitor. In other words, the conflict is based on the perception that one of the sons of Jacob is chosen to continue the tradition, and the others are expelled from the lineage (Soller 1998:159).

The story of Joseph and his brothers is also a continuation of one of the key themes that emerge from the patriarchal narratives, namely that Yahweh made certain commitments to Abraham. The fulfilment of the commitments brought about the conflict. All the patriarchal narratives relate to the same idea, that Yahweh has undertaken to bless Abraham with descendants and land and to make him a blessing for other peoples, but as the fulfilment of the promise unfolds, there is conflict between all the families of the patriarchs (Goldingay 1980:13).

4.4.1 DIVISIONS AND CONFLICTS IN THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM

Firstly, in the family of Abraham, the fulfilment of the divine promise in Isaac's birth created a problem. The problem has to do with the relationship between Abraham's two sons (Fretheim 1994:488). Stated differently, in the family of Abraham there was an unspoken conflict between Isaac and Ishmael, which Goldingay (1980:18) calls tension between Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 21:9-10). But this study considered the covenant promise, that is who will inherit the promised land and be elected offspring, as the source of the tension "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac" (Genesis 21:10). Towner (2001:179) argues that "[t]he real issue in Sarah's mind only now emerges. She is concerned lest Ishmael inherit along with Isaac. Given the overarching promise-fulfillment scheme of Genesis, money may not have been her primary worry, but rather Isaac's eligibility to

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inherit the promise made to Abraham's heir – the promise of progeny, land, and the greatness of an elect destiny". In the end, Ishmael and even the sons of Keturah who came later were sent away and Isaac became dominant and the progenitor (Genesis 21:14; 25:5-6) (Soller 1998:159).

4.4.2 DIVISION AND CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY OF ISAAC

In the family of Isaac there was conflict that also was rooted in the covenant promise: "Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob'" (Genesis 27:41).[33] In this regard Thompson (2011:195) points out that "[h]aving been twice supplanted by the trickster Jacob, Esau's exceedingly bitter cry (Gen 27, 34) at Jacob's betrayal is used to express his hatred for his brother, awakening him to a plan of murder and revenge" (Gen 27, 40-41). What makes Esau cry bitterly and even plan murder for Jacob's betrayal is the fact that Jacob craftily took the position of inheriting the promised land and the elected offspring (Genesis 27:34-36). The implication was that, in the end, Esau had to leave while Jacob became dominant and the ancestor (Genesis 36:6-8).

From the foregoing it can be seen that the concept of who will inherit the promised land and be the elected offspring is quite pervasive in the patriarchal narratives, where it is a prominent and recurring motif (Genesis 12-50). Consequently, these elements become the source of family conflict that spans the patriarchal story (Turner 2009:161). As discussed above, it is given greater involvedness in the conflict of Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau.

4.4.3 DIVISION AND CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY OF JACOB

Division and conflict reach their zenith in the story of Joseph and his brothers (Kaminsky 2001:135). This denotes that the storm of the conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers was devastating beyond imagination. In Genesis 37:12-35, the narrator recounts how arbitrary violence took over and brought about even greater havoc within the family of Jacob. It was the cause of a lasting rupture, the breaking apart of family ties, and the breach of peace and concord

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[33] Fretheim (1994:518) points out that the "[c]onflict begins with issues of kinship and inheritance, especially primogeniture, which in turn catches up the characters in acts of deception and all their spiraling consequences."

that had far-reaching consequences. The discord was to last for twenty-two years (Berthoud 2008:7).

In other words, division and conflict developed in the family of Jacob, and it continued to grow and defined the relationship between the brothers in the family. The conflict started from hatred to not being on talking terms and then escalated to the point where Joseph's brothers took action that was more or less equal to killing him. In addition, the conflict was rooted in the perception that the younger in the family would supplant the older ones and inherit the Promised Land and be the elected offspring. So we see in Genesis 37:18-20: "But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted. 'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." Soller (1998:159) points out that "[t]he intense hatred of the brothers toward Joseph becomes more understandable. It is not the resentment of a less favoured to a more favoured son. It is the fierce hatred for a usurper, by those who fear being completely disinherited, and despoiled of their birth right and blessing".

Therefore it can be argued that the covenant promised was the main source of the conflict that characterised the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, and the conflict was rooted in who will inherit the Promised Land and be the elected offspring among the sons of Jacob. As one reads the story, the narrator depicts certain actions by the characters that generate the conflict. Therefore the next section will look at the characterisation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

4.5 CHARACTERISATION IN THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50

In narratives, a character is revealed in what is said or done, by the character, by other characters, or by the narrator. Olam (2003:xxix) posits that "[w]e come to know what characters in a story are like as we watch them interact with other characters, as well as listen to what they say and what others say about them". In this study, characterisation means the examination of the characters to identify their participation in the conflict found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers (Jacobs 2003:317). This means the proper understanding of narrative calls for knowing who the "actors" on the scene are, and what their roles and mutual relationships are. As Cotter (2003:xxix) argues, one must pay special attention in the Bible to what the narrator says about the person. This is because little attention is given in the Bible to the inner lives of characters.

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And, since biblical narratives do not give access to the characters' inner lives, we must take advantage of whatever external clues we are given.

Therefore, as a framework for preaching reconciliation in the context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers implies that preaching reconciliation should focus on the roles of the characters in the conflict. That is, considering how the characterisation of Joseph, Jacob and Joseph's brothers in the story triggers conflict is a point of departure for preaching social cohesion. According to Long (1989:75), the impact of biblical stories is often a result of this dynamic of identification with the character. He further argues that, when we identify with a character in a story, whatever happens to that character happens to us at the level of imagination. This means that, in preaching biblical narratives, the fundamental importance of the story is a point of identification. In other words, when a point of identification is established with characters who are engaged in a realistic interaction, there is a possibility that such identification can have the effect of reshaping the life stories of those who hear the story in the sermon (Schlafer 1992:79). This implies that, as the biblical narrative is being preached, some characters are loved and idealised, whereas others are hated with a passion (see 3.6.1, 3.6.2, 3.6.3 and 3.6.2.1, 3.6.2.2).

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the manner in which the characters are introduced and the reference expressions used for them depict their participation in the story (Van Peursen 2013:85). The narrator describes the characters in a way that depicts them as participating in the conflict in one way or another in the story. Longacre (1989:43-44) outlines the actions that brought about the conflict between Joseph and his brothers:

> Joseph's tale-bearing to his father concerning his brothers, Jacob's obvious favoring of him, and the outrageous gift of a clock such as only supervisors or men of leisure wear, not common laborers. The dreams, however, provide the inciting incident for the action that eventually follows.

This means certain actions by Joseph, his brothers and their father Jacob led to the conflict in the story. As one reads through the story, the people who serve as the key characters are depicted performing one action or the other that generates the conflict. Therefore the following are some

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aspects of the characters that are important for understanding the conflict depicted in the story of Joseph and his brothers.

4.5.1 JOSEPH GAVE AN EVIL REPORT ABOUT HIS BROTHERS

"Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them" (Genesis 37:2). The plot of the narrative introduces Joseph as a person who gave a bad report on his brothers to his father. According to Alter (1981:116-117):

> Character can be revealed through the report of actions; through appearance, gestures, posture, costume; through one character's comment on another; through direct speech by the character; through inward speech, either summarized or quoted as interior monologue; or through statements by the narrator about the attitudes and intentions of the personages, which may come either as flat assertions or motivated explanation.

With this in mind, Joseph being depicted as having given his father a bad report about his brothers reveals how he plays a part in the conflict. The act of bringing a bad report on his brothers to their father generates conflict between him and his brothers. The narrator, however, did not give the content and the motive of the bad report. This has triggered a lot of interpretation on the meaning and motive of the bad report. For example, Janzen (1993:148) maintains that the English phrase here, like the Hebrew phrase it translates, can mean either Joseph's evil report about his brothers or the brothers' evil speech about Joseph. Hamilton (1995:406), however, argues that bad report, *dibbā*, is the whispering of hostile people (Prov. 10:18; 25:10). He maintains that the closest parallel to the use of a bad report in Genesis 37:2 is in Numbers 13:32; 14:36, 37, where it refers to the bad report of the land that the returning spies spread through the camp. Wenham (1994:350) upholds that "[t]he term 'tale' is always used elsewhere in a negative sense of an untrue report and here it is qualified by the adjective evil (Num 13:32; 14:36-37). So it seems that Joseph misrepresented his brothers to his father. This underscores the reason the narrator begins the plot of the narrative with Joseph giving a bad report on his brothers to his father. This means the bad report is fundamental in the conflict depicted in the story. As a matter of fact, the narrator aims to tell the reader that Joseph's bad report of his brothers was what set

the ground for the conflict depicted in the story. This is a conviction shared by Jacobs (2003:313), who argues that "the primacy of the conflict that characterizes the story of Jacob's family is introduced by the account of Joseph giving an 'evil report' [*rāʿāh dibbāṯām*] about his brothers to their father".

Besides being depicted as a source of conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the evil report also reveals Joseph persona as a character. That is, he is a person who gave fabricated or maligning information about his brothers to his father. Turner (2009:162) explains further that the content of the report is not given, nor whether it was justified or not. The word for the report (*dibbā*), however, suggests fabrication or slander in the majority of its uses (cf. Num. 13.32; 14.36-37; Ps. 31.13 [14]; Prov. 10.18; Jer. 20.10). Turner advances his argument with the question, does Joseph bring an innocent report of his brothers' bad behaviour, or does he concoct a fib in order to ingratiate himself with the father who already shows him favouritism? The invention of a fabrication to gain the favour of his father fits the context of the conflict, which is about who will inherit the promised land and be the progenitor. Moreover, as it will be argued later in the study, the motif of Jacob's favouritism toward Joseph was to make him the next patriarch. Joseph's bad report about his brothers to his father therefore seems to have lent credence to this assumption that the bad report was aimed at making Joseph the favoured candidate for the next patriarch. This is a conviction shared by Soller (1998:160), who argues that:

> Like Ishmael who left Canaan for the wilderness of Paran and Esau who left Canaan for Seir, the brothers may have already begun to reconcile themselves to expulsion from the inheritance of Abraham. That is Genesis 37:2 can be read to mean that Joseph brought to his father not an evil report about his brothers, but the evil report originated by his brothers about the land. This would indeed be some- thing that Joseph might feel obliged to bring to his father's attention.

From the foregoing, the characterisation of Joseph in the conflict as depicted in the story is that of the person who gave a bad report about his brothers. However, it is not only giving a bad report on his brothers that describes the personage of Joseph in the conflict, as he is also depicted as a master dreamer in the story. This will be looked at closely in the next section.

4.5.2 JOSEPH'S DREAMS OF SELF-EXALTATION

In Genesis 37:6-7, Joseph said to his brothers: "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." And in v 9 he continues: "Listen, I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me," The double dream, according to Wenham (1994:351), suggests the certainty of fulfilment, that "the thing is established by God" (Genesis 41:32).

If giving a bad report reveals the character of the personage of Joseph as someone who provokes the hatred of his brothers; the manner in which he brags about his dreams did so even more. Joseph insisted on sharing his dreams with his brothers without bearing in mind their feelings toward him. For example, after the first dream, the narrator said that the brothers hated him because of his dream and what he said (Genesis 37:8). When he had the second dream, instead of keeping it to himself he told his brothers about it. This shows that Joseph was out to portray an attitude of self-exaltation over his brothers, and this is especially related to the fact that the dreams portrayed him as someone who will one day be a ruler over them. Jacobs (2003:313) rightly points out that, "[d]espite the tension, Joseph, having dreamed dreams indicating his future glorification over his family, disclosed these to his brothers (37.5-11). This disclosure widened the rift between him and his brothers". The characterisation of Joseph in this episode is more or less the same as in the conflict that characterises the patriarchal narratives in which the younger supplant the older (Genesis 21:14, 27:35). Here the dreams point toward the same occurrence − Joseph will rule over his brothers and the brothers resisted with hatred and even actions that equal killing (Genesis 37:8, 19).[34]

In addition, the context in which Joseph and his brothers lived might have influenced the misinterpretation of the dreams, thereby creating a feeling of superiority on the side of Joseph and a feeling of hatred on the side of his brothers. For example, Arnold (2009:319) points out that dreams and the interpretation of dreams were taken very seriously because they were viewed

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2 Cotter summarises the episode thus: Joseph dreams twice and twice invites his family to share his point of view, to come inside his own mind and view his dreams with him. In 37:7 and 9, Joseph uses the word hinneh in recounting his dreams, which means behold; in this case readers are invited to share Joseph's point of view, that is seeing what he is seeing, and in doing so we see Joseph's dreams of lordly domination over his family twice (Cotter 2003:271).

as a means of divine communication throughout the ancient world. It was common practice for people to tell their dreams to others because dreams were considered to be predictive, supernatural revelations and compulsory to the degree that the action in the dream was expected of the person who dreamed. It has been said that, during the ancient period, foreign rulers engaged professional interpreters as part of their staff (Genesis 41:8; Daniel 2:2-13, 52-53). In Genesis specifically, dreams to a certain extent appear to be means of God's communication. Prior to Joseph's dreams, there are some people in Genesis with whom God communicates through a dream, for example Abimelech (Genesis 20:3-7), Jacob (Genesis 28:12-15) and Laban (Genesis 31:24). These people's dreams, like Joseph's dreams, have no explicit interpretation, but the meaning was clear to those to whom the dream was conveyed.

Although the narrator did not give an explicit interpretation of Joseph's dream, the response of his brothers after hearing him shows they believed in the dream. This is well portrayed in their response and attitude toward Joseph: "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he said" (Genesis 37:8). Fretheim (1994:599) infers that "[t]he meaning of Joseph's two dreams may be transparent, but interpretations, implied in their questions, are made only by brothers and the father. Joseph stands in the position of authority over them". Furthermore, Gaebelein (1990:227) maintains that "[t]he significance of the dreams is stated in the words of Joseph's brothers: Will you actually rule us? This reveals the sense of bowing down to be an acknowledgment of royalty and kingship". The brothers, through this assertion, have no doubt about the import of Joseph's dream. They foresee the dream pointing to a future where they will become their younger brother's subordinates and subjects and him their ruler (Hamilton 1995:410-411). They oppose such a notion to the point of taking action that was more or less equal to killing Joseph.

So far the study has identified how Joseph is depicted as someone who plays a part in the conflict between him and his brothers. This occurs through, Joseph's maligning of his brothers, and his persistence in sharing his glorious dreams about the future with his brothers. Jacob has also been portraying in the narrative as someone whose action contributed to the conflict between Joseph and his brothers. The next section will pay close attention to this.

4.5.3 JACOB'S GIFT OF AN ORNATE GARMENT TO JOSEPH

> "Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been
> born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him" (Genesis 37:3).

The characterisation of Jacob's attitude of giving Joseph special treatment over the rest of his sons depicts him as someone who takes part in the conflict among his children. This is because Jacob's action, according to the narrator, created enmity between Joseph and his brothers. So we read in Gen 37:4: "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him." Towner (2001:245) maintains that "[n]o sooner do we readers learn that Joseph is Jacob's favorite than images of sibling rivalry, family strife, and fratricide come into our minds. Matters are made worse by Jacob's gift to Joseph, a special, perhaps striped or long-sleeved, robe. No wonder the brothers could not speak to Joseph in shalom". The ornate robe literally became the object of hatred because it would have constantly reminded Joseph's brothers of how partial their father was to him. This means it was not Jacob's love for Joseph that aroused his brother's hatred, but the privileged position Joseph had with respect to the others, declared openly in his father's gift (Westermann 1987:262-263).

Although the narrator is not explicit about the meaning and motive of Joseph's robe, the issue of favouritism in inheriting the promise land and being the elected offspring is very prominent in the patriarchal narratives. For example, Sarah suggests that Ishmael should be sent away so that he will not share the inheritance with Isaac (Genesis 21:10). Rebekah coaches Jacob on how to deceived Isaac and get the blessing of becoming the next progenitor (Genesis 27:8-17). Here the same motif is being displayed by Jacob through the ornate robe. In this regard, Simon (2001:7) asserts that:

> Jacob was determined to guide Joseph to his birthright painlessly and effortlessly.
> Given that his own brother Esau had been his father's favorite, he had secured his
> birthright and the paternal blessing only at the cost of deceit and humiliation.
> Determined that his beloved Joseph would not have to come to his father under
> cover of blindness, disguised as his brother in the firstborn's clothing, Jacob
> openly and publicly granted him the garment of importance and preference.

Several interpretations of the meaning and motive of the ornate robe give more credence to this. For example, Westermann (1996:5-6) argues that, in the Septuagint, the Hebrew *ketonat passim* (many coloured) is translated as "multi-colored robe", as is the case in the Latin and Luther Bible. He maintains that Gunkel, along with the majority of Old Testament scholars, prefers the translation "long robe with sleeves". He further argues that the actual meaning of the original Hebrew is not known with entire certainty. However, in 2 Samuel 13:18, the same expression is used to describe the attire of Tamar the princess. This shows that the garment of Joseph is rather distinctive. Janzen (1993:149), on his part, argues that "[t]he robe (Ketonat) is a special sort indicated by the puzzling word passim (many colored, long sleeved, spangle) whatever it is, a ketonat passim is also what kings' daughters wear" (2 Samuel 13:18). Wenham (1994:351) adds that, apart from its occurrence in this chapter, the term occurs only in 2 Samuel 13:18-19 as the robe of a princess. However, he maintains that another possibility, based on the cognate Aramaic term "palm of hand or foot", is that it was a long garment reaching to the ankles or the wrists, that is, with sleeves. Wenham's interpretation of Joseph's robe concurs with Lowenthal's (1973:17) comparative study of Joseph's robe and the garb worn by Canaanites aristocrats' contemporaries of Jacob:

> Reproduction of 4000 years old painting shows that the garb of the Canaanite aristocrats' contemporaries of Jacob, was an ankle-length, chemise-shaped gown with colored, embroidered stitches down the side and middle. Sometimes, sashes with colored, diagonal stripes draped the things.

From all indications, Joseph's robe signifies something that indicates a garment that identified Joseph as the possessor of the birthright. In other words, the intent of the special garment was to be a symbol of Joseph's authority and favoured positioned in the family (Morris 1976:536; Constable 2014:248).

The ornate robe, whether or not it was aimed at making Joseph the progenitor, depicts Jacob's role in the conflict between Joseph and his brothers. Besides Joseph and Jacob, however, Joseph's brothers are also depicted as ones who play a part in the conflict in the story. The next section will consider this.

4.5.4 THE ROLE OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS IN THE CONFLICT

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the sons of Jacob are portrayed as a single character, they are anchored to Joseph throughout the story as "his brothers" (Van Peursen 2013:90). Throughout the story they are referred to as Joseph's brothers. It is from this picture that the study considers their characterisation in the conflict depicted in the story. The narrator introduces Joseph's brothers' participation in the conflict by saying, "Joseph's brothers hated him and could not speak a kind word to him, they hated Joseph all the more because of his dream and what he had said" (Genesis 37:4, 8,). This reveals their initial feeling and attitude toward Joseph. However, the feeling and the attitude grow to thoughts that have potential for killing Joseph, as the brothers were jealous of him (Genesis 37:11).[35] According to Wenham (1994:353), "[t]he word jealousy in this context seems to be a stronger and deeper passion than hatred: in various passages, it is a feeling that is liable to spill over into violence action (e.g., Numbers 25:11, 13)". The feeling and attitude of Joseph's brothers toward him reached a climax when they resolved to kill him:

> They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. Here comes that dreamer! They said to each other. Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams (Genesis 37:18-20).

Here, the point of view is that of the brothers – they saw him from afar and, before he reached them, they conspired to put him to death. It is from the brothers' point of view that the episode can be seen. They hate him at the outset, and now they plotted to kill him (Van Peursen 2013:92). According to Wenham (1994:353), the intensity of the actions is not in Joseph's brothers' sentiment, but in their choice of words; that is, they speak of "killing" – a verb generally used in relation to the illicit taking of human life (Genesis 4:8, 14; 12:12). This is what Esau planned to do to Jacob (Genesis 27:41-42). Schlimm (2011:171) maintains that "[j]ealousy

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[35] The brothers' point of view is invoked three times, in 37:4, 18 and 25, and 32. For instance, they understand that Joseph is loved more than they are by their father. This point of view fuels their hatred for their younger brother. In 37:18 they see the object of their hatred approach and decided to rid themselves of him. When they see traders pass by, in 37:25, they move the responsibility of killing Joseph to slavery, that is, let the Egyptian slavery do it for them. Finally, in 37:32, they invites the readers, and their father, to shift from focusing on them and focus on their brother's blood-stained coat, the symbol of their hatred for Joseph (Cotter 2003:271).

leads Joseph's brothers to thoughts of fratricide. When they see the master dreamer approaching from a distance, they plan to kill him (37:18-19; the word is "rah," the same word as in Genesis 4:8; 27:41, 42)". What is depicted here is a calm deliberation that Joseph's brothers hold in their will and imagination to execute him before he gets near to them (Genesis 37:18). This is not the first time such deliberation is being portrayed. Esau had the same thought of killing his brother after the death of their father (Genesis 27:41). With such a decision the reader is confronted with the heart-breaking actions taken against Joseph by his brothers. Therefore the following depicts Joseph's brothers' actions toward Joseph.

4.5.4.1 JOSEPH'S BROTHERS THREW JOSEPH INTO A CISTERN

The narrator describes the actions of Joseph's brothers toward him, saying: "When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe – the ornate robe he was wearing – and they took him and threw him into the cistern" (Genesis 37:23-24). Wenham (1994:354) argues that "[t]he succession of verbs, stripped, took, dumped, sat down conveys the speed and roughness of the brothers' assault on Joseph". The picture of Joseph's brothers' action conveys rough or violent treatment of someone with great disdain. At the outset, they hated Joseph to the point of not speaking shalom to him. Now the hatred is being demonstrated in an act of rough or violent treatment of Joseph. Morris (1976:542) describes the scenario as follows: "Having decided what they were going to do, the brothers laid hands on Joseph as soon as he reached them. The first thing they did was to strip off the resented coat of many colours, his vaunted symbol of prestige. Then they threw him, probably violently down into the dry well." In addition, Ada (1990:141) describes Joseph's brothers' actions:

> The brothers, who are human in our estimation in the first part of the chapter, appear absolutely inhuman in the second part. They change into a gang of plotters of evil, mockers, and aggressors. With cruel pleasure, they strip Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colors upon him (23), cast him into the pit, and sit down to eat bread (25). To add to their pleasure, they soak the coat of many colors in blood and send this symbol of the father's pampering to Jacob, accompanied by the seemingly naïve question: "This have we found, know now whether it is your son's coat or not?"

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They started by "stripping off" – the term is also used for skinning an animal – the special tunic he was wearing. The ornate robe, the literal sign of their father's favouritism toward Joseph and also the symbol of becoming the next progenitor, is stripped off. Furthermore, they hurled (like a dead body) Joseph into a cistern. The term is especially used in relation to the casting of dead bodies (compare Jer. 38:6, 9), and it suggests abandon to die (Wenham 1994:354). Hamilton (1995:417) points out that, when used with a person as its object, to cast – "salak" – refers to the placing of a dead body in a grave (e.g. 2 Samuel. 18:17; 2 Kings 13:21; Jer. 41:9) or to the placing of a living body into what is assumed will be its grave (e.g. Gen. 21:15; 37:24; Jer. 38:6). With the possible exception of Gen. 21:15 and 2 Kings 13:21, all these verses refer to the hurried and careless placement of individuals who are held in contempt by those who place them.

A close parallel between Joseph's brothers' inhumane treatment of Joseph can be seen in how Joab (King David's army commander) and his men treated Absalom after killing him: "They took Absalom, threw him into a big pit in the forest and piled up a large heap of rocks over him" (2 Samuel 18:17). This means that after killing him they dumped him carelessly into a big pit and treated him so because he was held in great disdain by Joab and his men. Another similar example is the way the Prophet Jeremiah was treated by the officials of Judah after his prophecy of doom to the nation: "They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud" (Jeremiah 38:6). Again, the action was done by those who felt great hatred for the prophet. In the same manner, Joseph was thrown into the cistern by his brothers because they held him in great contempt.

Since this current study was conducted within the context of African society, it is interesting to consider the way in which dead bodies are treated by this society or community. Some African oral traditions reveal that the way dead bodies of people are handled shows how much respect the society accords the person who dies. For example, people considered as thieves, witches, those who bring bad luck, and even those who die of certain dreaded diseases have their dead bodies or corpses treated with disdain. It has been said that, in some communities or societies, when such persons die the dead body will be dragged on the ground to the pit or grave. Some would be thrown carelessly into the pit or grave. If a person is a wizard, a murderer, a thief, one who has broken the community code or taboos, he or she is refused proper burial – sometimes

their bodies are subjected to actions such as burning, chopping up, and being fed to hyenas (Anderson 2007).

Treating the dead in this way seems to be humanly degrading and even de-humanising according to African culture. However, those in question do not feel the pain of being treated as such because they are dead. In the case of Joseph, he was treated in a way that the dead body of a person considered worthless by African society would be treated. He saw what his brothers did to him, he heard what they were saying while doing it, and he felt the impact or pain of being treated as such. It is not only being thrown into a cistern that is the worse treatment done to Joseph by his brothers; they treated him like a slave. The next section will closely consider that.

4.5.4.2 JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SOLD JOSEPH INTO SLAVERY

Another aspect of the way which Joseph's brothers are characterised in the text is that they treated him as a slave or second class human being. They are portrayed as people who priced and sold their brother to the Midianites as possession or property. "So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt" (Genesis 37:28). Morris (1976:543-544) depicts the action thus: "When the Midianites reached Joseph's brothers, they hail them and told them their proposition. After bargaining a bit they settle on a price twenty pieces of silver as Joseph price." The twenty pieces of silver was the typical price of male slaves between five and twenty years old, both in the old Babylonian period and in Israel (Lev. 27:5) (Wenham 1994:356). After agreement on the price, Joseph was drawn up out of the pit, handed over to the Midianites and then carried to Egypt (Morris 1976:544). With this act, Joseph's status changed from that of a free person to a slave, that is he was considered a mere "thing", a commodity that could be sold, bought, leased or exchanged (Mendelsohn 1946:80). We are told elsewhere in the story that the Ishmaelites sold him to Potiphar in Egypt (Genesis 37:36). In addition, Potiphar's wife referred to Joseph as a Hebrew slave (Genesis 39:17). This means the status of slave remained Joseph's identity until the time he became governor in Egypt.

There is no explicit explanation of how Joseph's brothers treated him when they were selling him to the Ishmaelite, but there is an indication of a lack of human feeling for a fellow human being. This can be seen in how they refused to listen to Joseph's distress plea for mercy. "Surely

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we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we will not listen; that's why this distress has come on us" (Genesis 42:21). Hamilton (1995:526) argues that "[h]ere we are told that Joseph did not passively accept the brutal treatment from his brothers. Twenty years had passed when the brothers recalled how callous and indifferent they were when Joseph pleaded with (*hiṯḥănᵉnôʾ*) them. The hithpael of *ḥănān* is used when the subject is in real distress (e.g. Deut. 3:23; 2 Kings 1:13)". This, however, indicates the extent to which Joseph's brothers treated him inhumanely, thereby depicting their participation in the conflict. In the same manner, although there is no explanation of how the Ishmaelites treated Joseph before selling him to Potiphar in Egypt, the assumption is that they treated him as a slave because they bought him as their own commodity or property.

Furthermore, we are not told how Potiphar, who bought Joseph from the Ishmaelites, treated him as a slave. Although the Bible tells us that God was with him, he became a source of blessing to the house of the Egyptian, and was given a leadership position over the Egyptian house (Genesis 39:2-6). The names of Joseph's sons, however, speak volumes to what Joseph passed through in Egypt prior to becoming a governor (Genesis 41:51-52; see the next section for more detail). This means that life was not smooth for him as a slave in the house of Potiphar. The manner in which he was sent to prison by his master after hearing the testimony of his wife also sent a signal on how Joseph was considered as a "mere thing", not a human being with rights and dignity. Schlimm (2011:162) argues that "Joseph first suffered in the hands of his brothers, then faced sexual harassment amid slavery, and now is the victim of false accusations and wrongful imprisonment". This is why even when we are told that Joseph was given a leadership position over the prisoners (Genesis 39:22-23), the experience that he went through in the past is expressed by him when he said: "But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon" (Genesis 40:14-15).

However, the role of characters in the conflict of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is pivotal to the study because it serves as a point of identification in preaching reconciliation. Van Rensburg (2003:57), Long (1989:75) and Miller (1992:110) maintain that narratives enable the listeners to identify with the trials and tribulations, the joy and love of the characters, and to

experience solidarity with them that enables them to say: I am like that or I do not wish to be like that or what must we do.[36] Based on this, preaching reconciliation from the narrative of Joseph and his brothers must focus on the manner in which the narrator depicted the roles of Joseph, Jacob and Joseph's brothers in the conflict. These characters mirror how people's actions in one way or another have triggered conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. In addition, the characterisation of these characters in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers mirrors some actions people need to avoid in order to enhance social cohesion in the Middle Belt region.

The next section will consider how the characterisation of characters in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may serve as a point of identification in preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria (see 3.6).

4.6 NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50 AS POINT OF IDENTIFICATION FOR PREACHING RECONCILIATION

Biblical narrative is so powerful that it enables people to see themselves in the characters portrayed in the story – in Joseph, Jacob, and Joseph's brothers. This means that, in the narrative of preaching reconciliation, the story or the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may enable the people of the Middle Belt region to see themselves. As such, the sermon should be designed to invite the hearer to identify with one or more characters. Pieterse (1987:169) exhorts that "the preacher has to shape the identities of the believers through biblical texts so that the change in them concurs with the demands of the text". In narrative preaching, the identification with characters helps the hearer to see himself/herself in the character at some point (Booysen 2001:88).

Therefore, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers invites identification with actions like defamation of character, egocentrism, favouritism, jealousy, dehumanisation, and pain and trauma. These actions, it can be argued, in one way or another contribute to or fuel ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. It also

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[36] Through preaching, narratives construct and speak to listeners who share with the characters certain hopes, fears and general human concerns, and who for this reason are able to form a bond of identification and sympathy with them. But because they are situated elsewhere they need to be informed of the concrete situation of the character (Nussbaum 1995:7).

underscores the reason the narrative of Joseph and his brothers could be used as a homiletical framework for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region.

The following homiletical outline for preaching reconciliation was deduced according to the actions of the characters in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

4.6.1 DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER

As a framework for preaching reconciliation, the story of Joseph and his brothers portrays how conflict is rooted in humankind giving a bad image of one another. "Joseph brought their father a bad report about his brothers" (Genesis 37:2) is more or less similar to character defamation. Waltke and Fredricks (2001:499) say that "[t]e word report (*dibba*) by itself denotes news slanted to damage the victim", in other words saying things that depict a bad image of other people. The closest parallel to this episode in Pentateuch is the report of the ten spies about the promised land. "And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, 'the land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there we seemed like grasshoppers in our eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Num. 13:32-33). Dozeman (2002:123) points out that the "Hebrew bad report of the land *dibbat ha ares* includes a sense of defamation or slander". The response of the Israelites to the report, however, depicts the effects of giving a bad image of someone or something. Dozeman (2002:123) captures the reaction of the people: "They murmur, wishing they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness. They complain about divine leading, which in their view, has brought to the point of being slaughtered, and they fear that their children will become booty in a foolhardy invasion doomed to fail." This makes the narrative of Joseph and his brothers a good framework for preaching reconciliation, because it will enable people to realise given a bad image of other people, ethnic group or religion has a devastating effect. For instance, one sees a case of defamation of character in the creation of negative impressions about the Tutsi ethnic group that sparked the genocide that took place in Rwanda. Here there was a propaganda campaign with the intention to alienate the Hutu from the Tutsi before the genocide. The propaganda campaign criminalised the Tutsi, thereby picturing them as something to be exterminated. *Kangura* (Wake Up), an influential Rwandan newspaper, published the 'Hutu Ten

Commandments', which instigated Hutu hatred against their Tutsi neighbours.[37] These Ten Commandments picture what the study considers as giving a bad image of one another, or news slanted to damage another, because it was aimed at convincing the Hutu population that the Tutsi were their archetypal enemies. The propaganda evoked images of war, slavery, oppression, injustice, death and cruelty. The end result of the Ten Commandments was the genocide that claimed the lives of some 800 000 Rwandans, and during which approximately 75 percent of the Tutsi ethnic minority population was killed. In addition, 250 000 women became victims of sexual violence, and many of whom were killed afterward. An estimated 70 percent of the women who survived were infected with HIV. At the end of the 100 days of slaughter, 85 percent of Tutsis – equal to 10 percent of Rwanda's population – were killed and half of the population was either internally displaced or had fled the country (Verwimp 2004:233; Lower & Hauschildt 2014:1).

This means defamation of character creates the wrong impression about someone or something, which results in hatred, mistrust and invariably conflict and violence. This is portrayed in the story of Joseph and his brothers, where there was serious hatred that resulted in violence because Joseph gave an evil report, that is information slanted to damage the reputation of his brothers. As a result, the brothers hated him and eventually took action that was more or less equal to killing Joseph. Furthermore, the story in this respect may even make some people identify with

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[37] 1. Every Hutu should know that a Tutsi woman, wherever she is, works for the interest of her ethnic Tutsi group. Consequently, we should consider a traitor every Hutu who: marries a Tutsi woman; befriends a Tutsi woman; employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or concubine. 2. Every Hutu should know that our Hutu daughters are more suitable and dutiful in their roles as women, wives and mothers of the family. Are they not more wonderful, good secretaries and more honest? 3. Hutu women, be vigilant and try to bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason. 4. Every Hutu should know that every Tutsi is dishonest in business. Their only aim is supremacy for their ethnic group. As a consequence, every Hutu is a traitor who does the following: makes a business partnership with a Tutsi; invests his money or that of the government in a Tutsi enterprise; lends money to or from a Tutsi; gives business favors to a Tutsi (obtaining import licenses, bank loans, construction sites, public markets etc.). 5. All strategic posts, political, administrative, economic, military and these in the area of security, should be entrusted to Hutus. 6. The majority of the education sector, i.e. school pupils, students, teachers, must be Hutu. 7. The Rwandan armed forces should be exclusively Hutu. The experience of the October War has taught us a lesson. No member of the military shall marry a Tutsi. 8. Hutus should stop having mercy on the Tutsi. 9. The Hutus must, whoever they are, maintain unity and solidarity and be concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers; The Hutus in and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their own Bantu brothers; They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda; The Hutus must be firm and vigilant against their common Tutsi enemy. 10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961 and Hutu ideology must be taught at every level to every Hutu. Every Hutu must spread this ideology widely. Every Hutu who persecutes his Hutu brother because he has read, spread and taught this ideology is a traitor (Van Hapere 1994:105-106).

Joseph by becoming conscious of how their utterances, unguarded comments or open condemnation, hateful comments about other people, ethnic groups and religions, have triggered conflict and violence in one way or another in the region. In addition, the story will help people to be extremely careful of making unguided comments or offensive statements that create a bad image or wrong impression about other people, ethnic groups and religions because they generate or trigger conflict and violence.

4.6.2 EGOCENTRISM

The story of Joseph and his brothers is significant for preaching reconciliation because it will enable people to understand that egocentrism generates or fuels conflict and violence. In other words, it will give rise to a situation in which some people, because of their ethnic or religious affiliations, feel superior to other people, ethnic groups and religions. The notion of egocentrism is depicted in how both Joseph and his brothers misinterpreted Joseph's dreams. Towner (2001:246) aptly point out that "[n]o character in the story, including Joseph, grasps the full meaning of the dream of the sheaves until much later in the story when Joseph's brothers prostrate themselves before him whom they did not know (Genesis 42:6)". The lack of knowing the full meaning of the dreams from the beginning was what led to the misinterpretation that portrays an attitude of egocentricity in both Joseph and his brothers. For example, Joseph said to his brothers, "Listen to this dream I had", and the second time he said, "Listen I had another dream" (Genesis 37:6, 9). This depicts an attitude of being eager to tell something whether the listener wants to hear it not. Soller (1998:160) argues that, in telling the dream to his brothers, Joseph appears to be acting thoughtlessly, foolishly parading his election. This means Joseph's persistence in sharing the dreams that indicate he will rule over his brothers shows that Joseph's egotism overcomes his natural wisdom. Moreover, his enthusiasm about the dreams blinded him to his brothers' feelings toward him.

This is significant in preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, where egocentrism has and is blindfolding some people to how their attitudes, words and actions are causing pain, suffering, struggles and difficulties to others around them. Worst of all, the attitude of egocentrism has and is making some people judge people based on ethnic group affiliation and religion instead of on merit and content of character. Egocentrism in the strictest sense is a form of marginalisation and exclusion and this might have been the feeling of Joseph's brothers.

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In other words, in telling his brothers of the dreams, Joseph consciously or otherwise failed to realise it was an attempt on his part to marginalise and exclude the brothers of their share of the inheritance and tradition of Israel (Soller 1998:160). This attitude caused Joseph's brothers to act violently toward him.

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers has the potential to help some people and ethnic groups who parade themselves as being superior to others to become conscious of the fact that such an attitude generates and fuels conflict and violence. In addition, the story might, in one way or another, make people realise the extent to which their actions, words and attitudes of being egocentric have deepened the conflict and violence now experienced in the region. In addition, the story, above all, might help people to avoid action, comments and attitudes that portray them as being egocentric.

4.6.3 FAVOURITISM

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, favouritism is portrayed graphically as a mechanism that breeds conflict and violence. It is favouritism – the partial treatment of one person over the other – that made Joseph's brothers hate him to the point of not speaking shalom to him. "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (Genesis 37:4). In the patriarchal narrative, the issue of favouritism is portrayed as having devastating consequences. For instance, Sarah's favouritism toward Isaac led to Hagar and her son Ishmael being sent away unjustly (Genesis 21:10-15). Rebekah's favouritism towards Jacob led to conflict, to the extent that Jacob had to ran away to escape being killed by Esau (Genesis 27:41-45). In the same manner, Joseph's brothers hated him because they might have felt being marginalised, segregated and even unjustly treated by their father. Olson (2010:27) asserts that "Jacob favors the younger Joseph and provides him alone with a special long robe with sleeves, a public sign to the other brothers that Joseph was their father's favorite. As a result, the brothers hated Joseph". Furthermore, Westermann (1996:6) aptly points out that:

> Jacob was doing more than simply giving Joseph a nice gift; he was raising the
> boy to a level above that of his brothers. Here we must keep in mind the social
> function of clothing, which throughout the millennia has been one of the strongest

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and most conspicuous indexes of social status. Only in our own day and age has clothing come to lose some of this emblematic significance, and this is only because of the deep-rooted changes in human society which have been taking place of late.

This means that, in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, in which favouritism is depicted as an instrument that generates conflict and violence, will serve as a good framework for preaching reconciliation in a context where ethnicity and religion are mobilised to exclude and marginalise other people (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). This is because the story of Joseph and his brothers reveals that a situation in which people are marginalised and excluded creates hatred, mistrust, disunity and divisions, which result in violence. As a matter of fact, the story may help people to know the extent to which their attitudes, comments and actions of partiality, specifically nepotism and inequality, have had and are nurturing conflict and violence in the region. Furthermore, the story may enable people shun favouritism at all levels of society.

4.6.4 DEHUMANISATION

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts dehumanisation, that is a situation in which human beings deprive fellow humans of their human rights or human dignity. The Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka, captures the study's understanding of dehumanisation in words like "anti-humanism, reduction in self-esteem, nullification of human status and humiliation" (Soyinka, cited in Koopman 2010:241). Joseph was dehumanised by being treated as a slave, which is a mere thing or commodity, to be priced and sold. Such treatment meted out to Joseph reveals that to enslave is to deprive a person of his or her human rights and human dignity.

For a proper understanding of how Joseph's enslavement deprived him of his human rights and dignity it is necessary to consider how slaves were treated in the Ancient Near East. The treatment of slaves varied in the ancient world, but generally a slave was a person perverted into a thing (Gregory 1996:37) – a person held in servitude by violence, biological alienation and personal dishonour as the chattel of another (Freeman & Myers 2000:1232). Slaves were seen and treated like the possession or property of their masters. In most cases, slaves had little or no rights or status and many were treated harshly.

The slave's status as a mere thing deprives him/her of any human rights and human dignity by being relegated to being the property of the master. Since slaves were considered the property or commodity of their owners, the owner, and not the slave, would be compensated if the slave was injured, maimed or killed by a third party. In the relationship between the slave and his or her owner, almost everything depended upon the character of the master. The slave's fate was in the hands of the owner. The master had the right to beat and maltreat the slaves.

All slaves were answerable by their bodies: brutal punishment, torture and abuse were daily realities of slavery. Slave owners could hire the services of professional torturers (Exodus 1:11). Inscriptions attest to the services of professional floggers (Harrill 2009:305). In addition, because of the degrading status accorded to slaves, slave names were almost never mentioned; they had no genealogy, being people without a name (Genesis 39:14, 17, 19; 41:12) A case in point is how Joseph is referred to as a Hebrew (Genesis 39:14, 16; 41:12). Herbert (1962:130) asserts that "[t]he Hebrew is rarely used in the OT, but five times in the Joseph story and by an Egyptian in a derogatory sense, a foreign slave".

Since Africa and the Middle Belt region, in particular, have had a bitter experience of slavery, taking stock from African experience of slavery will add more understanding of how Joseph was treated as a mere thing or commodity possessed by his brothers, the Ishmaelites, and the house of Potiphar. According to African oral tradition, during the time of the slave trade, when people were sold as slaves, the community looked for those considered as thieves, troublemakers, rebels and a threat to the society. Selling them as slaves was more or less like getting rid of them from society or the community, just as Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave to get rid of him. And because slaves were considered mere things they suffered a number of disadvantages, one of which was the possibility of being sacrificed in accordance with traditional customs and religious beliefs. In addition, the status of a slave was never entirely forgotten, no matter how high a slave rose on the social scale and no matter the level of integration or assimilation, just like we are told about Joseph. Although he was put in charge of Potiphar's house, his master's wife called him a slave (Genesis 39:17, 19). In some ethnic groups in Africa, the living conditions and economic roles of slaves did not differ sharply from that of a free person, but when it came to sacrifice or the payment of a debt, it was the slave who was handed over. Some slaves dressed simply, while some wore a uniform-like dress as a mean of identification. This means a slave did not dress like

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his/her owner. The slave was supposed to be inconspicuous and was not supposed to mix freely with free men (Perbi 2001:11).

History has it that, during the time of the slave trade, slaves from Africa were regularly chained and punished with whips and branding irons, and that women were often raped. Some were subjected to harsh conditions; an excerpt from Alexander Falconbridge (1788) reveals some of the inhuman conditions slaves from Africa were subjected to in the process of being moved from their places of origins to Europe. They are fastened together, he said, two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists, and by irons tied up on their legs. Fifty or sixty, and sometimes more, were fastened to one chain in order to prevent them from rising or endeavouring to escape. If the weather proved favourable, they were permitted to remain in that situation from eight in the morning until four or five in the afternoon. They were commonly fed twice a day, about eight o'clock in the morning and four in the afternoon. On most ships they were only fed with their own food once a day. The hardships and inconveniences suffered by the slaves during the passage were scarce to be enumerated or conceived. They were violently affected by sea-sickness, which frequently led to death, especially among women. These harsh conditions continued in the plantation economies in the Caribbean and the Americas. Enslaved Africans laboured to produce highly profitable commodities such as sugar, tobacco and cotton, which were exported to Europe. The story of slavery from the time of the Ancient Near East to the African context of slavery and the slave trade is the story of the inhuman treatment of human beings by others.

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers, and the history of slavery in the Ancient Near East and Africa, where slavery is depicted as a mechanism that dehumanised humankind, will serve as a good framework for preaching reconciliation in a context where ethnicity and religion are mobilised to exclude and marginalise other people. The notion of exclusion, segregation and marginalisation depicts deprivation of human rights and human dignity. The story of slavery, from the life of Joseph to the treatment of slaves taken from Africa, reveals marginalisation, exclusion and, above all, the deprivation of human rights and human dignity of one person by another. In addition, slavery depicts denying people under slavery the environment and opportunity to display their talents and abilities and, worst of all, the enabling environment to

flourish. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery to get rid of him so that his dream of becoming a leader over them would not be achieved.

The story of Joseph and his brothers, and invariably the story of slavery, reveal that it is more or less slavery to deny people who qualify for admission to study in a certain institution because they belong to a certain ethnic or religious group. It is more or less slavery when people who are qualify are denied the opportunity to work in a certain institution or organisation because they belong to a certain ethnic or religious group. It is more or less enslavement to refuse voting to people who are qualified to hold certain positions because they belong to certain ethnic or religious groups.

As a matter of fact, the story of Joseph and his brothers may help people to know the extent to which their attitudes, comments and actions of marginalisation and exclusion have and are nurturing enslavement that is resulting in conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Furthermore, the story may enable people to avoid the mobilisation of ethnicity and religion to deprive other people of their human rights and human dignity through marginalisation and exclusion on all level of society.

4.6.5 PAIN AND TRAUMA

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts pain and trauma in a situation where humankind initiates the suffering and sorrow of their fellow human beings. This is very significant for preaching reconciliation, because it may enable people to realise that conflict and violence breed pain and trauma. The issue of human beings causing pain and sorrow to their fellow humans is quite pervasive in the patriarchal narratives. For example, the conflict in the family of Abraham ended in pain and trauma: "Then Hagar went off and sat down in about a bowshot away, for she thought, 'I cannot watch the boy die.' As she sat there, she began to sob" (Genesis 21:16). In the family of Isaac, there is a depiction of pain and trauma when Isaac told Esau that his brother had craftily taken the blessing. "When Esau heard his father's word, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me – me too, my father!' Esau said to his father, 'Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!' Then Esau wept aloud" (Genesis 27:34, 38).

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, readers are confronted with another episode of pain and sorrow. There are two episodes of pain and grief depicted in the story. The first episode is when the story depicts how his treatment by his brothers inflicted pain and sorrow in Joseph's life. This means the inhuman treatment of Joseph by his brothers, coupled with his being a slave and inmate in Egypt, might have cause pain and anguish in his life for many years. Although this is not mentioned explicitly by the narrator, the names of Joseph's sons gives a glimpse of what he went through prior to his becoming a governor in Egypt. "Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, it is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household. The second son he named Ephraim and said it is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering" (Genesis 41:51-52).

According to Morris (1976:589), the boys were named by Joseph in recognition of his experiences. The first was named Manasseh, meaning 'forgetting' and signifying that God had caused Joseph to forget all the long years of suffering and rejection he had endured. His second son was named Ephraim in thankfulness for the manner in which God had so richly blessed him and allowed him to prosper in the very land where he had been unjustly afflicted for so many years. Hamilton (1995:512) points out that Manasseh means the closing of the door on all the harsh treatment he has been exposed to over the last thirteen years. He is free from the emotional bondage and trauma of what happened to him in the past. Hamilton maintains that the name is self-explanatory – God has made him forget entirely all his suffering. The suffering could have been at the hands of brothers back in Canaan, or his recent suffering in Egypt. This means the names of the sons of Joseph preserve his experiences in the foreign land (Westermann 1986:97).

The second episode is where conflict and violence bring about protracted grief and sorrow. This is depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, where the conflict between Joseph and his brothers brought about prolonged pain and inconsolable grief in the life of Jacob. According to Longacre (1989:31-32), the picture of Jacob's grief over the seeming death of Joseph is very heartbreaking, as Jacob tore off his clothes and put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days, and all his sons and daughters rose to comfort him and he refused to be comforted and he said, I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol and he bewailed his son Joseph. This mourning for many days reveals the intensity of Jacob's grief. He suffered this pain and grief for about twenty-two years until the time he discovered Joseph was alive. That is until the time "[h]e

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saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived" (Genesis 45:27). This means that Jacob mourned for many years, from the time he saw the blood stain on the coat signifying that Joseph had been devoured by a wild animal (Genesis 37:32-33). When the family realised that the patriarch would not cease observing the mourning rites, they met in council, both the sons and daughters, and went to Jacob hoping that the sight and effort of all his sons and daughters would sooth his anguish, but he refused any comfort (Lowenthal 1973:30). Westermann (1986:44) points out that Jacob's sons and daughters all rallied to console him. Not only that, but they spoke words of comfort to bring about a change and have Jacob put an end to the rites of mourning. But Jacob remains obstinate and gave his reason (Genesis 37:35). He would remain in mourning until death. With such a confession and attitude of inconsolable mourning, the family's peace was shattered for a long time.

The picture of Jacob mourning is significant for preaching reconciliation in a conflict-ridden context because it depicts the devastating effect of conflict and violence. Coming to terms with the indication that Joseph had been devoured by a wild animal was a very painful moment for Jacob. Naturally, it is very painful when someone loses a beloved one. But it was more painful for Jacob because we are told he loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age (Genesis 37:3). So, being separated from the child he so much loved might have hurt him deeply. Janzen (1993:151) argues that Jacob's grief was so deep that he refused all efforts to comfort him.

In addition, the disappearance of Joseph might have caused inconsolable pain and grief in the life of Jacob because he was determined to make Joseph the next patriarch. It is as if Jacob's hopes and dreams for the future of the family were completely shattered. There was no meaning in life, which is why he refused to be comforted. It is not surprising that Genesis 37:35 says he refused to be comforted and confessed he would continue to mourn until he joined his son in the grave. Westermann (1987:266) upholds that the old man's life was marked by grief for Joseph. He would not allow his children to comfort him. He would remain in mourning until he died; then he would be reunited with his son. By this, the peace of the family remains breached.

It is possible that Jacob's pain was aggravated by the fact he was the one who sent his son to meet the perceived untimely death. According to Lowenthal (1973:30), "the father's refusal to be

comforted was perhaps also caused by his sense of guilt for having sent Joseph on the perilous trip". The thought of how Jacob ignorantly play a role in what happened by sending Joseph on a dangerous mission that ended up with Joseph being devoured by a wild animal might have lingered in the heart of the old man for a long time. How could he forget the fact he was the one who sent Joseph to Shechem to go to see to the well-being of his brothers? This could have been the reason the old man found it difficult to stop mourning. Elsewhere, Jacob told Pharaoh: "My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers" (Genesis 47:9). Wenham (1994:451) infers that Jacob's years were few and difficult because they were years of running way from his parents, an unhappy marriage, and more recently the mourning of his favourite wife and son.

This underscores the need for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region, where exclusion and marginalisation are causing pain and trauma in the life of some people. As the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is preached, it may help people to realise that marginalisation and exclusion produce lingering pain and trauma in the life of other people. It may help people to see how, in some or other way, they played a role in shattering and devastating other people, families, ethnic groups and religions. What is more, preaching the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may help people in the Middle Belt region understand how conflict and violence caused by divisive ethnicity and religion cause perpetual sorrow in the life of others. This is because, through such conflicts, people lose their loved ones, houses and businesses. Because of conflict and violence, some people's hope has been shattered, their future is bleak, pain and trauma are the daily meditation, while anger, resentment and revenge are the preoccupation of the mind. Only reconciliation will bring about healing and restore a flourishing future.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In the beginning of the chapter, it was said that over half of the Biblical literature consists of narratives. Biblical narratives are the portion of the Bible that is written in the form of a story. The stories are artistically arranged in a way that the event moves to the level of tension, called climax, and then descends to a level of resolution.

There are certain actions of the character that trigger the conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. These actions, in one way or another, are connected to the issue of who will inherit the promised land and become the elected offspring. For example, Joseph's brothers hated him because he gave an evil report of them to their father. It is argued in the chapter that the aim of the report was to make Joseph a favoured candidate for inheriting the promised land and elected offspring. Another action that triggered the conflict between Joseph and his brothers was Jacob's buying of a richly ornamented robe for Joseph. The garment was a symbol of Joseph's authority and favoured position in the family. The intent of the garment was to raise Joseph to a level of inheriting the promised land and being the elected offspring. Furthermore, there was conflict between Joseph and his brothers because he had two dreams, each pointing out that he would a leader over his brothers and his parents.

The conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is also triggered by some actions by Joseph's brothers. The starting point of their actions begins to manifest when Joseph's brothers' hatred degenerates into jealousy – a feeling that has the potential for killing. It is such a feeling that resulted in Joseph being dehumanised by being thrown into a cistern. The act of throwing Joseph was similar to the way the body of a dead person who is held in great contempt is hurled into a pit or grave. Besides being thrown into a cistern, Joseph was relegated to a mere thing, a commodity that could be sold, bought, leased or exchanged by his brothers. They priced and sold him based on the value of a slave. The Ishmaelites also treated him in the same manner by selling him to Potiphar in Egypt. The status of being a slave remained with Joseph until the time he became a governor in Egypt.

As a framework for preaching reconciliation, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts character defamation. This means conflict and violence are rooted in people giving a bad image of one another. Joseph's brothers hated him because he gave an evil report about them to their father. In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts egocentrism as a fertile ground for conflict and violence; this means that some people considered themselves superior to others. The misinterpretation of Joseph's dreams by both Joseph and his brothers portrays Joseph in the position of a ruler over the family of Jacob. The story also pictured injustice as a root cause of conflict and violence. Joseph's brothers hated him because their father treated him differently from his brothers.

Furthermore, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts protracted pain and anguish. This means conflict and violence bring about pain and trauma. This is graphically portrayed in the names of Joseph's sons (Genesis 41:51-52). For instance, the first son was named Manasseh, meaning God has caused him to forget the long years of suffering hatred, rejection, dehumanisation, slavery, injustice and all forms of maltreatment in Canaan and Egypt. Furthermore, when Jacob saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, his spirit revived (Genesis 45:27), but he had spent about twenty-two years in pain and anguish over the perceived death of Joseph. All his sons and daughters had made an effort to bring about change and to ensure that Jacob put an end to the rites of mourning. But Jacob remained adamant and confessed that he would continue to mourn until death. With such a confession and the inconsolable mourning the family peace was shattered for many years.

Looking at the way Joseph suffered, it can be argued that it is humanly difficult not to consider revenge concerning the evil that was done to a person in the past. It is humanly difficult to forgive those who inflicted pain, sorrow, anguish and trauma on a person. It is humanly difficult to accept, live with, walk with and grow together with those who hated to the point of taking action that equalled killing and murder of a person. But Joseph did not only refrain from revenge, but forgave and lived with, walked with and prospered together with those who had maltreated him in the past. As such, the study considers the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as a model for showing compassion instead of revenge to those who wronged one in the past. The story of Joseph and his brothers also is a model of forgiveness without the demand for repentance or confession of the evil done in the past. In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is a model for accepting, living with, walking with and growing with those who wronged one in the past.

The next chapter will identify themes like compassion instead of revenge, forgiveness without demanding for repentance, and building a common future pertaining to reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers and contemplate its potential in preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

Chapter 5

Healing and Reconciliation in the Narrative of Genesis 37-50

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, some possible themes were identified from the biblical texts of Genesis 37-50, specifically how the fracturing of society is depicted in terms of conflict between brothers in the family of Jacob, which potentially could be helpful for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

The study will now consider the way in which the healing of society manifests itself in terms of reconciliation in the story of Joseph and his brothers.[38] For in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are not presented with a doctrinal definition of "reconciliation", but rather, as the story unfolds, we are enabled to see various aspects of reconciliation in action (Amos 2006:11). In this chapter, the study considers how characters in the story exhibit characteristics of transformation or change that enables reconciliation. So we will see how a significant aspect of reconciliation is forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past. The characters are depicted as coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation, serving as a symbol of true reconciliation. The study thus will examine how preaching may be a channel of shaping the imagination of the hearer by drawing on images of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. With this in mind, the study examined themes of reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching in order to help remind people of the possibility of reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

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[38] The most obvious examples of reconciliation in Genesis are the accounts of the reconciliation between brothers: between Jacob and Esau (Genesis 32-33) and between Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37-50). In both cases, a brother has been wronged; Esau has been deprived of his father's blessing by Jacob's deceit, and Joseph has been sold into slavery by his brothers. In both scenes, the hostility that resulted from the act of wrong is overcome and a new – and different – relationship apparently is created (Amos 2006:12).

5.2 TRANSFORMATION AS PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is not an event or occasion; rather, it is a process or an ongoing phenomenon that involves concrete steps (Wink 1998:21). Reconciliation, like the conflict that was depicted in the previous chapter, involves chains of actions and reactions; it involves change of or transformation by the 'offender' (perpetrator) and the 'offended' (victim). In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers one finds a distinct transformation in the life of Joseph and his brothers that leads to reconciliation between the sons of Jacob (Nwaoru 2011:9). Thus, the narrator shows how Joseph and his brothers move from one stage – of being in conflict – to another stage – of experiencing reconciliation.[39]

In the previous chapter, Joseph and his brothers were shown to have been engaging in certain actions that led to conflict. As the story unfolds, Joseph and his brothers exhibit some characteristics of a change in point of view and actions that facilitate reconciliation. Sternberg (1985:296) argues that "Joseph and his brothers went through a change of heart from fraternal enmity and brutality to cohesion, the repentance of evil done or contemplated". The change depicted in Joseph and his brothers, however, is what the study considers as processes or steps toward the reconciliation of the sons of Jacob after many years of strife and separation. The following are some of the changes that are shown in the life of Joseph and his brothers that facilitate reconciliation between them (Genesis 42-45).

5.2.1 TRANSFORMATION IN POINT OF VIEW

A necessary aspect of reconciliation involves a change in point of view that involves a change of heart with regard to evil contemplated. For the purpose of this study, the change in point of view in the story is that both Joseph and his brothers are depicted as displaying characteristics of change from thoughts of killing or revenge to thoughts of compassion or sustaining human life. Three days after Joseph's encounter with his brothers, both are depicted as experiencing a change in point of view. Sternberg (1985:291) states further that "[t]he three days' interval gives Joseph as well as his brothers the time necessary to adjust to shattering experience and do some

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[39] Smith (2005:169) points out that "Genesis 37-50 presents a double plot, bifurcating and reuniting to tell Joseph and his brothers' story – a story that takes as its unifying plot action reconciliation. This reconciliation has both human and divine dimensions".

soul-searching". This interval offered all the parties involved some time for personal reflection and transformation, after which the narrator depicts them as having a change in point of view, from being focused on killing or revenge to focusing on thoughts of compassion or sustaining human life.

5.2.1.1 JOSEPH'S BROTHERS' TRANSFORMATION

In the previous episode (4.4.4), Joseph's brothers' point of view is depicted in the expression "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him" (Genesis 37:20). Cotter (2003:274) argues that the brothers decided to kill Joseph "using the verb *hrḡ*, which connotes greater violence than the one used by the narrator in Genesis 4:8 to describe Cain's killing of Abel". The thought that occupies the mind of Joseph's brothers at this juncture is revealed in their words, which display thoughts of killing, murder, shedding of blood and death. According to Wallace (2001:16), "[t]he kind of hatred referred to here is too virulent and dangerous a passion to be given a welcome even for a moment in a person's mind".

However, as McConville (2013:643) says: "In fact, one cannot read the story without supposing that the characters undergo a profound inner transformation." This means that Joseph's brothers exhibited characteristics of transformation from the thought of killing to human compassion. For example, in Gen 42:21, Joseph's brothers are depicted as saying, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that is why this distress has come on us". Berthoud (2008:8) stresses that, "[a]s to Jacob's sons, the events surrounding the selling of Joseph into slavery surge up in their memories as if it had just happened. They recognize their guilt, acknowledge their heartlessness and relate their present distress to their past wickedness". In this episode, the reader is confronted with the sober reflection on regret by people who are characterised in the story as those who hated and treated their brother with contempt to the point of selling him into slavery, which is more or less like killing him. Their confession indeed is a sign of a change of heart from evil done to concern for the life of their brother.

In the preceding episode, Joseph's brothers' point of view of killing is revealed in their words, and now, in this episode, the point of view that characterises inner transformation or change of

thought is also revealed in their words. Their speech becomes a public confession of guilt for what they did to Joseph, whose anguished cries went unheard (Fretheim 1994:629). In their reflection, which is more or less like a confession, Joseph's brothers remember how painfully Joseph pleaded with them for his life, but they did not listen because they were blinded by thoughts of wanting to kill him. This means the three days' prison experienced in Egypt made them remember with regret how they treated their brother. According to Westermann (1986:137), "[w]hat is peculiar to the present situation is that the change of heart is the result of the brothers' experience". The change of heart is as a result of reflection on what has befallen them in Egypt. They acknowledge that they are guilty with regard to how they treated their perceived missing brother.

5.2.1.2 JOSEPH'S TRANSFORMATION

Just as Joseph's brothers used the opportunity they had to contemplate evil against Joseph, the narrator pictures Joseph contemplating evil when in a position of power over his brothers in Egypt. In other words, Joseph faced the temptation of doing to his brothers what they had done to him in Canaan when they had the opportunity over him. For instance, in the beginning of his first encounter with his brothers, Joseph is portrayed in a manner that is difficult for one not to consider the episode from the point of view of revenge. "As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them" (Genesis 42:7). In addition, four times Joseph accused his brothers of being spies and then he put them all in custody for three days (Genesis 42:9-17). Here the narrator is not explicit about Joseph's intention of pretending to be a stranger to his brothers, and also the reason for accusing them of being spies or putting them in prison for three days. To this, Wenham (1994:406) argues that, "[b]y failing to explain Joseph's conduct explicitly, the narrator leaves the reader to surmise and fill the gap and this allows the creation of a multidimensional image of Joseph".[40]

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[40] The gap in the motive of Joseph's treatment of his brothers during their first encounter in Egypt has attracted many interpretations. According to Sternberg (1985:286), the gap forces a choice between inference and incoherence, as no reader can afford to ignore it and many have left their closures on record. Their motivations for Joseph's conduct have always proceeded along four main lines: punishing, testing, teaching, and dream fulfilment. Predictably enough, however, each line is wrong because all are right. Fretheim (1994:627), in turn, argues that Joseph's encounter with his brothers here is a reverse situation of Chapter 37; he now has the power and his brothers are at the mercy of his decisions. The text now addresses Joseph's use of that power. While some scholars have a basically negative view of Joseph's use of authority, we side with those who take a more positive view.

Considering how his brothers treated him and the kind of suffering he went through as a result of being sold into slavery, it can be argued that Joseph is portrayed in this episode as being possessed with thoughts of revenge. Alter (1981:164) asserts that "Joseph is not unknowable to God or to the narrator but he must remain opaque because he is a human being and us, the readers of the story, see him with human eyes". Seeing Joseph with human eyes, especially as the person who suffered much inhuman treatment at the hands of his brothers, prompts the following questions: Why does Joseph pretend to be a stranger to his brothers? Or why did he speak to them harshly? (Genesis 42:7). And, worst of all, why would Joseph, of all crimes, charged his brothers with being spies? Westermann (1990:66) provides more understanding of the implications of being spies during the time of Joseph.

> The accusation of espionage represents the most extreme reaction to the crossing of boundaries. The traveler who innocently goes his way through a certain area is accused of spying with an unfriendly purpose. This represents the first experiences of deadly peril because of the borders which have been established between the lands of settled residents. The brothers probably know that they are powerless in the face of this accusation. How are they to prove that they are not spies?

One could further ask why Joseph would put his brothers in prison for three days (Genesis 42:17). With regard to these questions, Jacobs argues that there is potential for good and evil at every juncture in the story of Joseph and his brothers. This means the story presents a depiction of human interaction within which good and evil arise and in which God works toward the deity's own purpose (Jacobs 2003:312). Elsewhere, Jacobs (2003:323) argues that more suspicion of Joseph's participation in evil is seen in his encounter with his brothers. However, the climax of Jacob's (2003:324) argument on Joseph's participation in evil is in the episode of Genesis 42:7-17:

> Here Joseph has the fate of his brothers in his hands much as they had his fate in their hands. He has the power to kill them – evil – or to spare their lives – good (or at least a lesser form of evil). Yet Joseph falsely accused the brothers of being spies, a charge/deed punishable by death. Joseph had experienced the

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consequences of being falsely accused (chs. 39-40), but he falsely accused his own brothers. Furthermore, Joseph had experienced imprisonment as a result of the false accusation, yet he subjected his brothers to the same fate. These behaviors can hardly be legitimately interpreted as acts of 'good' unless 'good' is taken to mean the lesser of two adversities as in the choice between selling or killing Joseph.

Therefore, it can be argued that Joseph's action as depicted in this episode has an intention of revenge about it that might appeal to the person who has gone through a series of painful and traumatic experiences: attempted murder, enslavement, seduction followed by a charge of attempted rape and three years in jail. This makes the desire for a revenge reading find fast anchorage in the tit-for-tat design of the language. Furthermore, the wordplay in "Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them but he pretended to be a stranger to them" (Genesis 42:7) seems to underscore the notion of the plan for revenge. Moreover, his characterisation in this episode also rhymes with the brothers' own scheming in the previous episode, when they saw him at a distance and, before he reached them, they plotted to kill him (Genesis 37:18) (Sternberg 1985:288). From all indications, the gap portrays Joseph as having intentions of revenge. This means that, in the foregoing, the characterisation of both Joseph and his brothers depicts them as having thoughts of death and, at an interval, such thoughts manifested in their interaction with one another.

The narrator, however, makes Joseph's brothers connect the experience in Egypt with how they treated their brother to the hearing of Joseph which made him turn away and began to weep (Genesis 42:23-24). This means Joseph is depicted as hearing the confession and invariably their transformation, which enables him to contemplate thoughts of life and makes reconciliation possible, as it lies within his power. In other words, the brothers' reflection on the past moves Joseph to tears and shows recognition of the connection, a recognition that opens the gateway to reconciliation (Westermann 1986:288-289). In addition, the tears seem to signal the desired change in the life of Joseph because, after weeping, he says to his brothers: "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: Let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households" (Genesis 42:18-19). According to Berthoud (2008:7), "[a]fter three days of reflection, Joseph has mellowed somewhat and his attitude is more

balanced. Simeon alone will remain in Egypt as a hostage while his brothers will return to Canaan with plenty of goods".

Joseph is not only pictured as reflecting on the thought of life for his brothers in his words, but he is portrayed as taking action that proves there is thought of life in his intentions. "Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey" (Genesis 42:25). This means that keeping his brothers for three days and after hearing the confession of their transformation, Joseph's thoughts become focused on life as in the survival of Jacob's family. Hamilton (1995:526) asserts that "Joseph is genuinely concerned that a sufficient portion of grain provisions be transported to the needy in Canaan; such is his concern for his family's well-being". He allowed nine of his brothers to take food for the starving family in Canaan, thereby providing for the immediate and future needs of his brothers. The money put back in their sacks, along with the provisions, signifies immediate needs, while the grain is aimed at meeting future needs. All these are indications that his thoughts focus on life. In the foregoing, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as having undergone a change in point of view. That is a change from concentrating on thoughts of killing or revenge to thoughts of sustaining human life.

5.2.2 TRANSFORMATION IN ACTIONS

In addition to a change in point of view, reconciliation involves a change in action. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers we see how there is a distinct movement – from the conflict between brothers that resulted in violence to the characters taking responsibility for one another. In Chapter 4, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers are pictured as participating in one way or the other, thereby fuelling the conflict depicted in the story.[41]

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[41] We have seen how the most prevalent action that sparked conflict in the patriarchal narratives is egocentrism or self-centeredness. There are many accounts of how such attitudes in the patriarchal stories have led to the inhuman treatment of one person by another. For example, in the family of Abraham, Sarah requested that Hagar should be sent away so that Ishmael may not share in the inheritance with Isaac. This led to Hagar and her son being treated inhumanly and unjustly (Genesis 21:10, 14-16). In the family of Isaac the same action became the source of conflict when Jacob, with the connivance of his mother, fooled Isaac into granting him the patriarchal promise while Esau mourned painfully and bitterly (Genesis 27:8-29, 34-38). The same occurrence is depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, where egocentricity plays a major role in the family fracture that lasted for twenty-two years (Genesis 37:18-28, 33-35).

As the story of Joseph and his brothers unfolds, there is a change of action when the characters are shown to display signs of change from egocentricity to a sense of familial responsibility – that is, a commitment to the well-being of one another. The depiction of change from selfishness is recorded in the episode of Genesis 44:10-34, where the silver cup belonging to Joseph is found in Benjamin's sack, signifying the perceived thief will become Joseph's slave in Egypt (Genesis 44:10). Here the reader is confronted with a picture of change toward family responsibility in Joseph's brothers' action. Instead of Joseph's brothers abandoning Benjamin to his fate and continuing with their journey as they did to Joseph, they are depicted to having "[torn] their clothes, then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city" (Genesis 44:13). In this regard, Sternberg (1985:425) points out that "[t]hey say nothing, but their action speaks louder than words. When Joseph disappeared, it was only Jacob who tore his clothes (Genesis 37:34); now all the brothers do the first clear sign of fraternal solidarity. Whereas they had contrived to dispatch Joseph to Egypt, this time, they voluntarily return with Benjamin to Egypt". These are the same people who abandoned Joseph to die in the cistern.

These are the same people who sold their brother to unknown traders and watched unmoved as the Ishmaelites dragged Joseph away to an unknown destination. It is the same people who are now depicted being solidly behind Benjamin after the silver cup is found in his bag, signifying theft. Simon (2001:28) stresses that "[a]ll together, they return to the city and willingly enter the trap about to close on their young brother. Coming with rent garments before the Egyptian ruler, they throw themselves to the ground before him humbling themselves completely". Here there is no display of an attitude of discrimination and it does not matter to them now whether Benjamin is the favoured son of Jacob or the son of Rachel; all that matter is the well-being of their brother. The characterisation of Joseph's brothers depicts a change toward family responsibility, where brothers remain united for better and for worse.

In Judah's speech in Gen 44:30-34 one finds clear signs of the characters claiming responsibility for the well-being of their family:

> So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if
> my father: whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy
> isn't there, he will die. Your servant will bring the gray head of our father down to

the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, if I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life! Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come to my father.

Judah's speech here portrays the change that has taking place in the life of Joseph's brothers. The speech shows a high sense of familial responsibility, which depicts them as having concern for the well-being of their father (Genesis 37:32). According to Fretheim (1994:640), the "speech has strong emotional content, especially regarding the negative effect on their aged father (mentioned fourteen times). Whose life has been so filled with hardship and loss? Judah stresses that this is a matter of life and dead for him. He also recalls the violence done to Joseph". In the previous episode, Joseph's brothers are depicted as showing a lack of concern for the distress cries of their brother. They were more or less careless about how their action toward Joseph would affect their father, knowing fully that Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his sons. As a matter of fact, after selling Joseph, the brothers dipped his ornate robe in blood and said to their father with pleasure, "[w]e found this, examine it to see whether it is your son's robe" (Genesis 37:32).

In Judah's speech, the reader is confronted with a display of a high sense of familial responsibility. That is, Judah's speech reveals Joseph's brothers' commitment to the well-being of their father, as it does not matter whether their father is partial in his relationship with them or not; all that matters is avoiding that which will cause sorrow of bereavement in the life of Jacob. The sons of Jacob, who caused their father the sorrow of bereavement, have become the sons who are willing to sacrifice their whole future to spare their father the sorrow of parting with Benjamin. The people who once sold their brother Joseph into slavery for twenty silver pieces are now about to redeem their brother Benjamin at the cost of their own freedom (Simon 2001:32). Alter (1981:75) aptly asserts that:

Twenty-two years earlier, Judah engineered the selling of Joseph into slavery; now he is prepared to offer himself as a slave so that other son of Rachel can be

set free. Twenty-two years earlier, he stood with his brothers and silently watched when the bloodied tunic they had brought to Jacob sent their father into a fit of anguish; now is willing to do anything in order not to have to see his father suffer that way again.

Judah, the spokesman for Joseph's brothers, is depicted as portraying a change toward familial responsibility in the life of Joseph's brothers, who have become people who have undergone a transformation.[42] Westermann (1996:89) reasons that "[e]arlier they had managed to listen to their father's bitter lament without reacting. Now Judah says, when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol". The speech and action of Joseph's brothers reveals that they are committed to what will keep Jacob alive. This can be seen in Judah using Jacob's words in his speech: "If harm comes to Benjamin you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow" (Genesis 42:38). These are the same words that had earlier been spoken by Jacob. And in this sentence Judah assumes with his brothers the responsibility of his father well-being. As a matter of fact, Judah's plea to take the place of Benjamin in this episode is the climax of the reconciliation, which reveals the knitting together of the family for the future. This is because it shows the feelings of the ten for the younger brother, for their father, and for the whole family (Sternberg 1985:307). Elsewhere Westermann (1996:95) argues that "[t]he words of Judah have revealed to his brother that transformation has taken place in the brothers. When he now reveals himself to them as their brother, the exterior transformation thereby completes the one that took place on the interior. Now forgiveness and reconciliation have become possible. Judah's words were therefore by no means in vain; they receive their answer, even though it is totally unexpected one".

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[42] Judah's speech shows real transformation that is not effected by a supernatural phenomenon, but simply by a human being accepting the reality of his lot in life and responsibility for the choices he made. Jacob's name was changed to indicate that he had not really changed. He was and always would be Israel, the one who contended with God and other people. Judah's name is not changed, but he has really changed from the one who orients the world toward himself for selfishness to the one who acts to the benefit of others (Cotter 2003:316).

5.3 FORGIVENESS AS HEALING AND A PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION

The narratives of Joseph and his brothers depict forgiveness that is devoid of a demand for repentance or confession of the evil done in the past in the process of reconciliation. Jacobs (2003:337) points out that, "[i]n the story, reconciliation comes about without a direct and deliberate confession of evil. The brothers confess their guilt among themselves but not with the intention of asking Joseph's forgiveness". This means Joseph forgave his brothers without them asking for forgiveness. Joseph had all it takes humanly to revenge what his brothers did to him. Furthermore, he was in a position to make them beg him for forgiveness for all the pain and hardship they subjected him to before forgiving them. As a matter of fact, knowing how Joseph had authority over them, two times the narrator says, "[h]is brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence".[43] Elsewhere they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him" (Genesis 45:3; 50:15). Therefore the following are the basis for forgiveness in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

5.3.1 FOCUSING ON GOD'S PLAN AS BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS

As one reads through the story of Joseph and his brothers, Joseph is depicted twice as not focusing on how his brothers hurt and maltreated him in the past; rather, he focuses on how God turned the evil of humankind for good. So we read in Gen 45:5 Joseph's insightful words to his brothers: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." And in Gen 50:19-20, Joseph says to his brothers: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

According to Grossman (2013:192), "Joseph presents here a new narrative of his sale: He was not 'sold' but rather 'sent,' meaning it was God who brought about this event, and Joseph thereby manages to avoid blaming the brothers and lowers their level of culpability for the

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[43] The Hebrew term to dismay is בָּהַל (bahal) and the Greek term in the LXX is ταρασσω (tarasso). In both texts the verb is passive, which indicates that Joseph's self-disclosure has caused a strong fear in them. They are terrified in the presence of Joseph because he is the governor of Egypt and their lives are now in Joseph's hands. If before they had reasons to fear Joseph (Gen 42:28, 35; 43:18; 44:13), now they had much more because Joseph could take revenge (Saenz 2015:50). What does the highlighted number refer to?

incident". The narrator depicts Joseph in this episode as someone who did not focus on what his brothers did to him in the past. He did not blame, accuse or in any way try to make his brothers feel guilty for all the suffering and affliction that he went through. Joseph forgave his brothers because he directed what happened in the past as a means of accomplishing God's plan, which is saving many lives.[44]

5.3.2 BUILDING A COMMON FUTURE AS BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS

Fretheim (1994:644) convincingly points out that "Joseph does not scold or blame his brothers: he does not try to make them feel either guilty or shameful. He asks for no confession of sin and issues no absolution". In the action of Joseph, the reader is confronted with a prototype for reconciliation that does not demand repentance or confession of evil committed in the past; instead, Joseph seeks to reassure his brothers they have no need to be alarmed or to be irritated with themselves. In addition, he seeks to re-establish their dignity, which in their wickedness they had spurned. This is a graphic picture of what the study considers as a change from fixation in the past to focus on a common future.

Joseph is depicted in the other episodes as a person whom his brothers hated and would not speak shalom to him. He was violently separated from a father who loved him so much. It is the same person whom his brothers carelessly stripped of his ornate robe and violently threw him into a cistern. It is the same person who was dehumanised to the point of being priced and sold out like a mere thing by his brothers. He was a slave for about thirteen years and an inmate for three years. Joseph was in a position to demand repentance and even confession of these evils done to him, either willingly or forcefully, from his brothers. But he did not make reference to anything about the past; rather, he sought to allay the fears of his brothers so that they could redirect their focus to shaping the future. This means the focus of Joseph's forgiveness was the preservation of Jacob's family in the midst of famine. Westermann (1996:95-96) asserts that,

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[44] Joseph asked his brothers not to be distressed for selling him into slavery. The verb *distressed*, both in the Hebrew text (עָצַב : *'atsab*) and in the LXX: (λυπεω:*lupeo*), is passive. It indicates that Joseph's brothers were emotionally affected when Joseph was made known to them. The word *angry* in the Hebrew text is the verb (חרה: *hara*), "in that it emphasizes the "kindling" of anger, like the kindling of a fire, or the heat of the anger, once started. In the LXX it is an adjective (σκληρος *skleros*) translated as *hard* or *harsh*. This adjective is followed by a passive verb (φαινω *faino*) and is translated as *appear*. The Greek sentence is: μηδε σκληρον υμιν φανητω, which is translated as: *not seem hard to you*. Joseph says his brothers should not be harsh with themselves for what they did to him (Saenz 2014:52).

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"[i]n this presentation, the emphasis is on the healing through forgiveness. This healing, moreover, is further exalted by the fact the reunification of the family now results in both its preservation and its protection: to preserve for you a remnant on earth".

Forgiveness, however, is not reconciliation, but a healing process toward reconciliation. As Wink (1998:14) argues: "Reconciliation is more than forgiveness because it requires that those who have been separated by enmity mutually forgive each other and walk into a common future together." So far in the study we have seen a depiction of a change of point of view, a change of action and forgiveness as the process of reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. The actual reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is depicted in the coming of the sons of Jacob to build a common future. The next section will consider how Joseph and his brothers walk into a common future together.

5.4 BUILDING A COMMON FUTURE AS THE BASIS OF RECONCILIATION

The reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is that the brothers did not ask Joseph's forgiveness, nor did Joseph ask theirs. This means the focus of the reconciliation was not on trying to remedy the evil done in the past, but rather on the building of a common future (McConville 2013:643). Jacobs (2003:337) states that the "story suggests that reconciliation after a grave evil comes about not necessarily by recalling all of the evils but by the building of a common future. The reconciliation, therefore, focused not on the brothers' explanation of their evil against Joseph, but on their future together". The coming together of the sons of Jacob after many years of shattered peace and separation is for them to build their shared future together. The common future, however, is the promise God made to the ancestors of Israel. Fretheim (1994:593) captures the whole idea thus: "Family conflicts are resolved for the sake of a unified family moving toward God's promises."

When God called Abraham (Gen 12:1-4), he promised him a land, becoming a great nation and being a blessing to other nations. In addition, God made the same promise to Isaac (Genesis 26:3) as well as Jacob (Gen 28:13-14). From the time of Abraham to the time of Jacob, the focus of the promise is in the form of the covenant made with an individual patriarch. This notion of an individual being chosen by God to become the progenitor and others being sent away triggers

conflict in the patriarchal narratives. As one reads through the patriarchal stories there are many episodes where family members treated one another inhumanely and unjustly because only one person was chosen to become the bearer of the promise. A case in point is Hagar and her son Ishmael, who were sent away because Isaac was the person chosen to be the ancestor (Genesis 21:10). In the family of Isaac, Esau wanted to kill Jacob because Jacob was chosen to be the carrier of the promise (Genesis 27:41). In the family of Jacob, Joseph's brothers hated and took actions equal to killing Joseph because they initially held the perception that Joseph would be the one to inherit the promised land and the rest would be sent away.

When God appeared to Jacob the second time in Luz, after he returned from Paddan Aram, the focus of the promise changed from being a promise to an individual to one to the community as a whole. So we read in Gen 35:11-12: "A nation and community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." This time, the promise has a community-oriented focus; that is, Jacob's entire family is chosen to be the bearer of the promise (Fretheim 1994:585). The change of focus of the promise by God to choosing all the sons of Jacob to carry on the patriarchal promise makes Joseph and his brothers have a common future. Jacob, while talking to Joseph, made reference to the change of focus in the promise: "I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you" (Genesis 48:4). Jacob is depicted in this episode as revealing to Joseph the common future of the sons of Jacob. Joseph and his brothers are chosen by God to become a community that will carry the promise of God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Hamilton (1995:628) points out that "Jacob repeats the promises of God about fertility, multiplication, that his seed will be an assembly of nations, and finally the promise land. It is like saying son, let me tell you about our God and the precious promises he made for you and the family, and our family families". In addition, Fretheim (1994:593) argues that, "[w]hen Jacob first speaks God's promise to Joseph, he refers to all of his offspring. Joseph follows through on this by speaking the promise to all his brothers".

Furthermore, when Jacob was about to die he blessed all his sons, signifying that all of them have a shared future (Genesis 49:1-2). Wenham (1994:459) argues that Jacob is the father of the nation of Israel, so in blessing his sons he is giving an allusive preview of the future of the tribes

who are to make up that nation. That is, Jacob more or less unveils the future of each tribe and the nation of Israel emanating from the sons of Jacob. From the foregoing, it can be argued that the coming together of Joseph and his brothers, after many years absent of shalom, hatred, inhuman treatment of one by many and separation, is for them to build a shared future, that is being a God-chosen family.

Therefore, the following themes depict the common future that became the grounds for reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

5.4.1 THE SURVIVAL OF JACOB'S FAMILY AS THE BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

One of the motivation and perhaps the common future that became the foundation for reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is the survival of Jacob's family and the descendants of Abraham and Isaac in the midst of famine. The story of Joseph and his brothers portrays Joseph and his brothers as coming together after many years of separation to overcome the crisis of famine that threatens the survival of Jacob's family. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers he did not just overlook the evil done to him in the past, but he is depicted as focusing on God's plan of sending him to Egypt, that is the survival of the family of Jacob. So we read in Genesis 45:7: "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." And in Genesis 45:7; 50:20 Joseph said: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." In this episode, Joseph tells his brothers that all that has happened in the past is in accord with God's plan for the survival of the family. Joseph seems to be saying to his brothers that God knew there will be famine so he used your action to bring me here so that the family of Jacob may stay alive. As Fretheim (1994:644) proposes:

> Joseph says fundamentally that, in spite of their past history, all will be well because what has happened corresponds to God's purposes. He invites them to view the past from the perspective of the present; everybody is alive. God has taken over what they have done and used it to bring about this end. Their actions have become God's by being woven into his life-giving purpose.

Westermann (1996:96) furthers notes that "[t]he same statement appears three times in this speech. It is plain how the narrator dwells on it and underlines it as if he wants to say to his hearers that here they can find what this story is all about. It is about God's rule over human activity, God's guidance of destinies that can totally transform human plans and make out of them something that corresponds to God's plan (Genesis 50:20)."[45] The reader in this episode is being introduced to the climax of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. All that happens to him corresponds to God's plan – God's plan of saving lives, and above all the fulfilment of God promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In these verses we have summed up the essence or theme of the Joseph story. God sent Joseph to Egypt through the action of his brothers so that he could save Jacob's family and many others from death by starvation (Wenham 1994:428).

The reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers, however, denotes the immediate fulfilment of God's plan, which is the survival of the family of Jacob in the midst of famine. It is not how Joseph's brothers treated him in the past that matters, but rather what counts is the mission that God sent Joseph to Egypt. The mission is the survival of the family of Jacob and, invariably, the survival of other people. More so, the mission is the reason God brought the sons of Jacob to be reconciled and stay together. As opposed to the act of selling, sending is characterised by the purpose and end result it is intended to achieve. "Sending" relates entirely to the end result of the mission, the place where the individual is sent (Grossman 2013:192). Saenz (2014:54) argues that "[t]he LXX translates as αποστελλω (*apostello*) the same word used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus' apostles. This word points out to a person sent on a mission, sent with a purpose, and sent with authority. In this way, the Greek text describes the mission and purpose of Joseph for which God sent him to Egypt".

After proclaiming that he had been sent to Egypt for the survival of the family of Jacob, Joseph is depicted as having thrown his arm around his brother Benjamin and wept and he kissed all his brothers and wept over them (Genesis 45:14-15). The weeping and kissing are emotional gestures of reconciliation. After that, the narrator tells us that the brothers talked with Joseph,

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[45] Three times in this speech it is repeated by Joseph that it was God who sent him to Egypt. (v. 5, 7, 8). These repetitions highlight God's work in the entire Joseph story. God appears as the main character, the hero of the story, because he drove and controlled all events. He gives salvation to Jacob's family, not to Joseph. The triumph is of God. The evil actions cannot go against him. He is the victorious hero (Saenz 2014:53).

signifying that a physical reunion has taken place (Coats 1980:32; McConville 2013:646). In this regard, Hamilton (1995:581-582) asserts that "[t]he announcement by the narrator that his brothers talked with and to Joseph is a signal that the breach between the brothers which long existed since Genesis 37:4 is now in the process of closing. The resurfacing of dialogue between Joseph and his brothers spells the end of alienation".[46]

5.4.2 THE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISE LAND AS THE BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation, however, is not limited to the coming together of aggrieved parties, but also includes staying together. The narrative of Joseph and his brothers does not only depict the coming together of Joseph and his brothers for the survival of Jacob's family in the midst of famine, but Joseph and his brothers are also depicted as staying together in the district of Goshen in Egypt. In Gen 47:11-12, for instance, we read the following statement: "So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and his entire father's household with food according to the number of their children."

Arnold (2009:366) maintains that "[t]hey settle in Goshen, are well cared for by Joseph, and they thrive and prosper for the reminder of the famine". The staying together in Goshen shows that Joseph and his brothers had not only changed and forgiven one another, but they were willing to walk the future together. Smith (2005:169) also stresses that the focus in chapters 37 to 45 is on how a family divided by selfishness and hate was brought back together and made one. The settlement in Goshen depicts how Joseph and his brothers stayed together, signifying that reconciliation had actually taken place.

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[46] After the reunion, Joseph is depicted as making arrangements for all the family, the father with all the sons and their families, to move from Canaan to Egypt. "Come down to me; you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have, I will provide for you (Genesis 45:9-11). Fretheim (1994:644) maintains that "Joseph is now committed to preserve his family's life in accord with God's purpose for the family which was revealed through the two dreams. Joseph assured his brothers that he will provide for all their needs – adults, children, animals – during the continuing famine". And with their move, reconciliation occurs. And the brothers commit themselves to a common future, facing together the survival of the family of Jacob in the years of famine (Coats 1980:32).

In the patriarchal narratives, there is no record of warring parties reconciling and staying together. For example, in the family of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael separated and stayed apart, with the descendants of Ishmael living in hostility to all the tribes related to them (Genesis 25:17-18). Also, the family of Isaac was ripped apart by conflict, and even when Jacob and Esau are said to have been reconciled they did not stay together (Genesis 33:16). In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, however, the reader is given a picture of actual reconciliation, where the sons of Jacob did not only come together but stayed together. That is, after many years of strife and separation they reconciled and lived together. Coats (1980:32) points out that:

> Contrary to the Jacob-Esau case, the physical reunion does, in fact, take place. Joseph makes arrangements for all the family, the father with all the sons and their families, to move from Canaan to Egypt. And with their move, reconciliation occurs. And the brothers commit themselves to a common crisis, facing together the years of famine in their future.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the settlement of Jacob's family depicts the future of Israel possessing the promised land. The reason God sent Joseph to Egypt ahead of the family is to preserve them from the famine with an eye toward the ultimate possession of the Promised Land. As we read in Genesis 45:7: "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." God reunites the family of Jacob after many years of separation to build a community that will possess the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The settlement of the family of Jacob in Goshen shows the beginning of Israel's future possession of the Promised Land. In this regard, Turner (2009:203) points out that:

> The migration from Canaan to Goshen raises once again the land promise that has been a major motif throughout the ancestral history. It is not the land promised to Abraham (cf. 13.14-17; 15.18-21; 17.8). Yet it is, ironically, the first land that they have been given (Genesis 47.11).

The settlement of Jacob's family in Goshen means that the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers is the foundation of the communal possession of the land. The reason for this is that it was the twelve tribes of Israel that emanated from the sons of Jacob that possessed the promised land. The settlement in Goshen now signifies the land promised to Abraham and Isaac is on the

way to fulfilment, beginning with the sons of Jacob staying together. God has fulfilled his promise to Abraham, Abraham's son and grandson (Genesis 12:1; 26:23; 32.). While the actual possession will be after many generations, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers depicts the dawning of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of possessing land and the depiction of the nations of Israel in the Promised Land.

5.4.3 BECOMING A GREAT NATION AS THE BASIS FOR RECONCILIATION

Besides staying together in the region of Goshen as a symbol of reconciliation, the family of Jacob moreover is depicted as growing and prospering together in Egypt. "Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number" (Genesis 47:27). Fretheim (1994:659) points out that the "people of Israel did not only survive in Goshen, but they thrive, gaining many possessions and in fullfillment of the divine promise (35:11; 1:28; 48:4) growing considerably (Exodus 1:7)". In Exodus 1:7 we have a depiction of how the family of Jacob evolved into the community in Egypt: "The Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in number and became so numerous that the land was filled with them."[47] The growth and prosperity depicted true reconciliation in the family of Jacob, thereby fulfilling God's plan for the descendants of Abraham.

As the story continues, Joseph and his brothers came together, stayed together and now, in this episode, they are depicted as growing and prospering together, which signifies that reconciliation actually had taken place. As a matter of fact, the growth of the family of Jacob depicts a change of focus in God's election from focusing on an individual to the broader community fulfilling God's promise to Jacob in Gen 35:11: "A nation and community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants."

Berthoud (2008:6) argues that:

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[47] Hamilton (1995:622) argues that, "[i]n Goshen Jacob's family was fruitful and become very numerous". Morris (1976:642) adds that "[w]ith a population of one hundred when they entered Egypt and over two million when left signified large growth rate".

With the arrival of Joseph on the scene, the patriarchal history was to take a decisive step. Jacob's household, including the patriarch's twelve sons, was to be the basis upon which a holy nation would be edified. The time had come for the patriarchal family to become a nation. It was in Egypt that this metamorphosis was to take place. It is a time of natural growth during which God bestows his blessing and protection upon His people, it is during such times that God's promises are maturing and growing towards fullfillment.

Indeed, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers can be understood as the foundation of the development of Israel into becoming a nation. After the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, the narrator shows how the family of Jacob settled in Egypt and grows in number (Genesis 47:27).

Furthermore, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers marks the end of God's relationship with individuals and ushers in God's relationship with a nation. Chiel (2005:5) argues that, "[f]rom the time Jacob settled in Canaan to the end of Genesis, the central theme of the biblical narrative is the transformation of God's relationship with the Jews". For example, among Shem's descendants, Nahor and Haran are set aside in favour of Abraham, among Abraham's sons, Ishmael and the sons of Keturah are set aside in favour of Isaac, while among the sons of Isaac, Esau is set aside in favour of Jacob. But in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the sons of Jacob became the ancestors of Israel and Judah (Segal 1967:28). That is, instead of a relationship with an individual patriarch, God's relationship is with the nation of Israel; initially Jacob's sons, and ultimately the entire people that descended from them. As a matter of fact, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers transports the reader from the world of the patriarchs in the land of Canaan to the world of the Israelites in Egypt (Adar 1990:137). Arnold (2009:317) furthers argues that the Joseph story has been incorporated into the Joseph narrative as the conclusion of Genesis, which is basically a focus on God's relationship with individuals, to serve as a bridge theologically and structurally between the ancestors and Exodus, which focuses on God relationship with a nation.

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, however, we are confronted with the reality that conflict derived from broken homes and communities is a vice to be overcome, and that unity in

intimacy does not mean that all members of the community should look alike and think alike. They do not have to be one ethnic group or religion. Jacob remains distinct from Joseph. And Joseph is not Judah or Simeon. In fact, Judah is not Simeon. Each approaches his contribution in his own way. But reconciliation crosses those distinctions and unites the separation created by conflict into one body of the people of God (Coats 1980:33). The reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers calls for crossing the religious and ethnic frontiers, distinctions and boundaries that dichotomise and polarise people in the Middle Belt region into one body of human beings created in the image of God. Therefore the next section will consider how preaching may shape imagination to make possible reconciliation as depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers among the people of the Middle Belt region.

5.5 NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50 AS IMAGERIES FOR PREACHING RECONCILIATION

The imaginative construal of the texts of the Bible brings about image and meaning in a constructive way (see 3.7). As Booysen (2001:38) argues, "[i]mage is the way by which one may obtain knowledge from the message. Images also function in order to make the lesser known or even the unknown clearer, and may assist in better memory of sermons". This study sees the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as imagery elements for reconciliation. As such, the study considers the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation. In other words, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as imageries for preaching may help in guiding people to acquire the power to conceive as definite the reconciliation depicted in the story of Joseph and his brothers (Troeger 2007:62).

Elsewhere, Troeger (2007:66) argues that, when imagination is faithfully engaged, preaching embodies the potential of human beings to use their creativity for holy purposes of justice, compassion, peace and reconciliation. The reason for this is that biblical stories beckon hearers into the world of the Bible and stimulate participation, evoke emotion and invite people to live in the narrative as it is being told. Stories create imagination in the mind of listeners or readers. That is, as the story is being told, the world of the story will be imaginatively constructed in the mind of the hearer.

The main focus of this study was to use the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in a way that may help in shaping people's imagination, to help people steer away from conflict and be committed to social cohesion in all walks of life (Nussbaum 1995:3). That is, the aim is to help people, and ethnic and religious groups, to acquire the ability to imagine what it is like to be reconciled and stay together like the family of Jacob (Nussbaum 1995:5). Gunn and Fewell (1993:1) aptly assert that:

> Biblical stories, like stories everywhere can powerfully shape people's lives – even when the story may seem innocuous. Stories order and reorder our experience; that is to say, they reveal the way things are in the real world. Stories are performative than simply explanatory. They give meaning to life, implicitly making proposals for thought and action which are then embodied in a re-created world.

Corcoran (2007:36) also notes that "[n]arratives and in particular biblical narratives, allow people to imaginatively try on a new life, a new community, and a new worldview".[48]

In the same manner, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers through preaching may be imaginatively constructed in the mind of the people of the Middle Belt region to enable hearers to contemplate thoughts and actions of a new life, a new community, and a new worldview. In the light of this, some homiletical principles will be introduced in the following section that may be helpful when contemplating the challenges for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region.

5.5.1 CHANGE FROM PROPOSED EVIL TO THOUGHTS OF SUSTAINING LIFE

From the narratives of Joseph and his brothers, it can be deduced that reconciliation is a gradual process. Conflict and violence fill people with the imagination of revenge, which almost always can be associated with proposed evil. Reconciliation demands a process of transforming the hearers' imagination, helping to substitute feelings of hatred, anger and contemplated evil with

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[48] Elsewhere Nussbaum (2001:236) argues that "[i]magination is a crucial part of the reproduction of healthy character, and hence of a society's transgenerational stability".

compassion, love and thoughts of sustaining life. One tool in such a process of transformation is preaching. So a biblical narrative that portrays the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers can fruitfully be employed as a framework for preaching reconciliation in my context of a community torn apart by divisions and conflict. It means using the transformation that occurs in the process of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers to help foster, in the imagination of the hearers, the importance of sustaining life that forms a central aspect of reconciliation in a contemporary context.

Glenn Paige, in his depiction of the term "non-killing", captures the essence of the notion of "thoughts of sustaining life" that is held up as a central theme in this study. He argues for "a human community, smallest to largest, local to global, characterized by no killing of humans and no threat to kill; no weapons designed to kill humans and no justifications for using them; and no conditions of society dependent upon threat or use of killing force for maintenance or change (cited in Irobi 2013:8). These virtues are depicted in the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers, where Joseph's brothers show feelings of guilt about their actions toward Joseph (Genesis 42:21). Joseph, on his part, is portrayed as recognising the value of the entire family of Jacob in allowing nine of his brothers to take food for the starving family of Jacob and also in giving provisions to his brothers for their journey back to Canaan (Genesis 42:19, 25). In the previous chapter, Joseph's brothers are depicted as being occupied with the thought of wanting to kill their brother Joseph. It is such thoughts that made them maltreat Joseph to the points of getting rid of him by selling him into slavery. Joseph also exhibits an attitude of thoughts of death in the manner he treated his brothers during their first encounter in Egypt. He spoke harshly to them, accused them of being spies and then put them in prison for three days.

As the story continues, the characters display thoughts of sustaining life. Joseph's brothers reflect with regret how they refused to listen to the painful plea of the perceived death of their brother. They remember how they treated him, which more or less was an attitude of change of thoughts, where they wished the past would be rewound for them to treat their brother well. Joseph, on his part, also demonstrated thoughts of sustaining life. After three days we are told that he detained one person and allowed nine people to take food to the starving family. In addition, the narrator tells us that Joseph gave his brothers provisions for their journey and returned their money.

Joseph's focus on sustaining life is graphically captured in Claassens's study of the character of Abigail in 2 Samuel 25. Like Joseph, Abigail is depicted as focusing on thought of life, that is a commitment to sustain human life. With food in her hands, Abigail was able to overcome well-armed David and his four hundred men (Claassens 2015).[49] Both Joseph and Abigail were committed to sustaining human life.

Joseph and his brothers' thoughts of life are the types of mental picture that should occupy the mind of people in the Middle Belt region. That is, through preaching the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, people may undergo a process of acquiring a vision of commitment to sustaining human life and not killing. This is significant, because the rate at which the value of human life has fallen in the imagination of people is seriously alarming. Human consciousness has become shaped to depersonalise enemies, so that people feel justified in hatred for and destruction of their fellow human beings. Troeger (1988:2080) argues that, "in the beginning people create the enemy. Before the weapon comes the image. People think others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them". This can be seen in the manner in which human lives are wasted on little provocation and within a short period of violence. The narrative account of Joseph stocking up food in order to sustain the life of people from different nations during the time of famine may be a helpful image for people in the Middle Belt region, challenging them to rather imagine an alternative understanding of stocking that will sustain human life, instead of hoarding weapons that may kill people.

Joseph's commitment to sustaining human life offers a sharp contrast with how much money is being spent on arms and ammunition in the world, while in the same world millions of people are

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[49] Claassens argues that Abigail's gracious acts of hospitality offer a sharp contrast to the inhospitable and violent acts on the part of Nabal and David. Her swift action in gathering great quantities of food (200 loaves, two wineskins, five prepared sheep, five measures of parched grain, 100 clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of dried figs in 1 Sam 25:18) are driven by a deep sense of compassion, which is more or less the same with thoughts of life. By doing so she acts on behalf of her family, having the faces of her sons and/or the sons of another mother in front of her eyes, as she is repeatedly said to hurry (vv 18, 23 and 34), gathering a huge amount of prepared food and sending it off to David and his men in a frantic attempt to avert war. Abigail knows that if she does not act and intervene, these men and boys with faces and names and histories will most certainly be slaughtered (Claassens 2015:4). Abigail's action depicts how people in the Middle Belt region should cultivate the imagination of sustaining human life. That is, people should be committed to offering that which will keep their fellow human beings alive. This calls for people to use their positions, knowledge, professions and everything within human power to sustain the life of other members of humankind, irrespective of ethnicity and religion.

living in absolute poverty.[50] A case in point is the huge amount of money spent by both the Nigerian government and the Boko Haram Islamic Militants for the purchase of ammunition. Yet the North-Eastern part of Nigeria is the region with the highest rate of poverty in the country. What is more, the activities of Boko Haram and the many ethnic militias in the Middle Belt region characterise human commitment, determination, and high intellectual capacity.[51] One cannot help but imagine that, if Boko Haram's commitment, determination and intellectual capacity was focused on thoughts of life, as Joseph did, the North-Eastern part of Nigeria and Nigeria as a whole would be ten times better than what the experience is today. Moreover, the story of Joseph attests to the fact that actions geared toward sustaining human life have the power to subdue human aggression, hostility, conflict and violence. This denotes that actions geared toward sustaining life facilitate reconciliation. As Gobodo-Madikizela (2014:20) says: "Our humanity is strongest when we are focused on that which sustained human beings: compassion, and an ethos of care for one another, rather than giving to fear and suspicion."

In addition, preaching on the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may help shape the imagination of the congregation by the replacing images of revenge that occupy the thoughts of people of different ethnic groups in the Middle Belt. Biblical stories have the power to heal hurts, to soften hearts, and to increase our ability to see ourselves, our

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[50] According Kajom (2015:106), it is estimated that legal sales in the small arms industry alone range from seven to ten billion dollars annually, with perhaps an additional three billion dollars traded through the black market. Also, Jeffey, Boutwell and Michael Klare (cited in Kajom 2015:106) note that roughly eight hundred and fifty billion dollars is spent annually on military forces around the world.

[51] More than 20 000 people are estimated to have been killed by Boko Haram, including more than 6 000 in 2015 alone, making it one of world's deadliest terrorist groups. By U.N. estimates, roughly 2.8 million people have been displaced by Boko Haram-related violence in North Eastern Nigeria, where approximately 5.6 million are in need of emergency food aid. Boko Haram has focused on a wide range of targets, but civilians in Nigeria's impoverished, predominately Muslim northeast have borne the brunt of the violence. Since 2014, Boko Haram has also staged attacks in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger with increasing frequency (Blanchard 2016). The northern economy has crashed, business is fizzling, income generated has dwindled. People find it difficult to make ends meet. Most of the times people come to market without selling anything. In the core service sector, schools, hospitals, hotels, parks and recreational outfits are going down. Foreign students are relocating to the south; many doctors have transferred to peaceful states, and hotels and parks now record a low turnout of visitors. All these portend losses for the northern economy. Previously there were more than enough human resources for business and production, including professionals, in the different service sectors. Now some of them have lost their lives, resulting in a mass exodus from the north to the south for safety. As of now there is no direct evidence that those who migrated because of insecurity have returned to the northern states they fled. The health, banking and insurance, and education sector have crumbled. Even vacancy announcements with attractive salaries and benefits are not responded to. Agricultural output is dwindling greatly because farmers in Kaduna, Plateau and Sokoto no longer go to farm for fear of what will happen to them (Chukwurah et al. 2015:376).

neighbours, our world, through God's eyes (Sauder 2009:48). Conflict and violence created by divisive ethnicity and religion bring about wounds and pains that nurture thoughts of revenge. This is why revenge attacks are more or less considered as reprisal missions, that is attacks based on vengeance. These have and are creating a non-ending cycle of violence between some ethnic groups. As the narrative of reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers is being preached, it may construct a mental picture of sustaining human life in the mind of the people. That is, people from different ethnic groups may be inspired by thoughts of sustaining the life of their fellow human beings created in the image of God, irrespective of ethnic group or religion. Through preaching to people, attitudes may change from destroying human life in the name of ethnic and religious differences to sustaining life. That is, people will be committed to sustaining the life of fellow humankind at every opportunity.

5.5.2 CHANGE FROM EGOCENTRISM TO HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

In addition to introducing images committed to sustaining life in people's minds as a central aspect of a process of reconciliation, preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region demands the use of images of commitment to the well-being of humankind, irrespective of ethnic group or religion. So it is important to help people move from self-centeredness that characterises conflict to self-sacrifice for the well-being of their fellow human beings created in the image of God. Through preaching, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers may help foster a process of reconciliation that is rooted in the importance of taking responsibility for one's fellow human beings so that people understand that they ought to be their brother's keeper and not their brother's killer.

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts Joseph's brothers sacrificing their own freedom for the sake of freeing their brother Benjamin, in addition to securing the well-being of their father. In the beginning of the story, both Joseph and his brothers displayed an attitude of selfishness and self-centeredness. Joseph was full of his future glorious dreams whereby he did not care about how such attitude hurt his brothers. Joseph's brothers, on the other hand, were so engrossed in their mission of getting rid of Joseph that they refused to listen to his painful plea. They did not consider how getting rid of Joseph would affect their father.

As the story unfolds, Joseph's brothers are pictured displaying a change from self-centeredness to taking responsibility of one another's well-being. This change is depicted in their solidarity with Benjamin when the silver cup was found in his sack. In addition, commitment to the well-being of their fellow human beings is displayed in how they were willing to sacrifice their freedom in place of their father's well-being. Earlier on in the story, they maltreated Joseph without feeling remorse about his pain and anguish.

Divisive ethnicity and religion are to a large extent a depiction of egocentrism. This is because the focus is on the self, even if it means hurting and eliminating human life. The egocentrism or self-centeredness that characterises the engagement of individuals from different ethnic and religious groups with one another in the Middle Belt region is described well in the following quote from Nussbaum (cited in Claassens 2015:1): "Serpents, lions, and bears, inhabit our souls – in the form of our jealous anger, our competitiveness, our retributive harshness. These animals are as they are because they are incapable of receiving another creature's life story into their imagination and responding to that history with gentleness".

The animals cited by Nussbaum never pause to ponder the feelings, hurt or even the plight of their prey because of their selfish inclination. All that matters to them is their self-survival, which is heavily at the expense of the survival of another animal. This means divisive ethnicity and religion as depicted in the above-mentioned animals is an imagination that focuses on the self, with little or no space for imagination of the other. As a matter of fact, imagination focused on self-centeredness results in marginalisation, exclusion, segregation, nepotism, discrimination and all forms of polarisation. These attitudes are very common in human interactions among the people of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

As the story of Joseph's brothers' sacrifice of their freedom for the well-being of their brother Benjamin and their father Jacob is being preached, it may create an imagination of willingness to sacrifice for fellow humankind in the mind of the people of Middle Belt region. People will start feeling concern toward their fellow humans – a feeling that will make them do anything humanly possible to avoid that which will cause pain and anguish to their fellow human beings. People will acquire the vision to stand for fellow human beings for better or for worse. In addition, the imagination of sacrificing for the well-being of humankind will enable people to disengage from

activities like the manipulation of religion and ethnicity for selfish gain, and religious fanaticism that brings disunity and division, and will focus on activities that enhance social cohesion. People will have a mental picture of a community where self-centeredness, ethnicity and religion do not count, but what counts is social cohesion.

5.5.3 CHANGE FROM FIXATION ON THE PAST TO ULTIMATE FORGIVENESS

In addition to the imagination of sustaining human life and commitment to the well-being of their fellow humans, another aspect of reconciliation depicted in the story of Joseph and his brothers is that of forgiveness. The reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation denotes using preaching as the process of reconciliation to fill people's mind with the imagination of forgiveness. Biblical narratives are a great source for filling people's minds with powerful metaphors and images of healing and reconciling (DuPriest 1986:307).

Conflict and violence fill the imagination with thoughts of hatred, anger and resentment that make forgiveness difficult and sometimes impossible. But as the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is preached, it may help dismantle thought processes that focus on hurt, wounds, pain and anguish inflicted in the past to the imagination of acceptance, accommodation, unity and social cohesion. In the story of Joseph and his brothers, Joseph is depicted as saying to his brothers: "Do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me into slavery" (Genesis 45:5). This shows that Joseph did not demand repentance or restitution for the evil done to him in the past. Rather, he accepted and accommodated his brothers, despite the pain, anguish, maltreatment and wounds they caused him in the past. Joseph's act of forgiveness is well captured by Walter Wink (1998:16):

> The goal of forgiveness is always reconciliation. Moreover, reconciliation means, finally, re-establishing love between two or more estranged parties. Forgiveness for my own sake is selfish, narcissistic, and private. God calls us to forgive so that the walls of enmity can be torn down between races, between sexes, between nations, between classes, between neighbors, between strangers, between family members and friends.

Joseph's forgiveness is devoid of self; that is, he did not forgive for his own interest but he forgave his brothers for the sake of reconciliation. This is why he is depicted as focusing on how God turned the evil intention of his brothers to promoting the well-being of humankind. According to Joseph's interpretation of events, God turned that which caused him pain to bring about the survival of many lives, and inevitably the survival of the family of Jacob. For Joseph said to his brothers, it is not you that brought me here but God sent me to preserve for you a remnant on earth and save your lives by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7; 50:20).

Through preaching, the people of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria may benefit from hearing stories regarding the importance of accepting those who are perceived to be enemies. Elizabeth Achtemeier (cited in Wallace 1995:17) writes that, "if we want to change someone's life from non-Christian to Christian, from dying to living, from despairing to hoping, from anxious to certain, from corruption to whole, from vengeance to forgiveness, we must change the images, the imagination of the heart". Changing the imagination of the heart is important, because it enables forgiveness for the sake of reconciliation. Focusing forgiveness of the self may lead to a fixation on wounds, pain and anguish caused by the evil done in the past. The end result is a rigid demand for repentance and even restitution before reconciliation. Fixation on the evil done in the past had and is making people make conditions that are humanly impossible to meet before reconciliation. The reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may help to fill people's minds with a mental picture of seeing the people considered as enemies as fellow human beings created in the image of God.

The type of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is quite unusual because it does not appeal to the human desire for revenge of evil done or the desire to see evil befall those who cause pain to us. It is very unusual of Joseph to have reconciled with his brothers without demanding repentance or confession of the evil done to him in the past. It is extraordinary to see how Joseph, who might have suffered pain and grief of being stripped of his glorious ornate cloth of royalty and glory, which is more or less like being stripped of human dignity forgave his brothers. In addition, Joseph might have suffered the emotional pain and trauma of seeing himself being dehumanised to the point of being treated like a dead body and, worse still, the dead body of a person for whom society has lost respect that is carelessly dumped

into a cistern. The implication of Joseph's forgiveness for preaching reconciliation for this study is aptly captured by Tutu's (Tutu & Tutu 2014:16) argument that:

> Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our Jailor. When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves.

5.5.4 BUILDING A COMMON FUTURE AS MOTIVATION FOR RECONCILIATION

A change of attitude, change of action and even forgiveness are central aspects of the process toward reconciliation. However, building a common future is a key to the coming together of the sons of Jacob after many years of strife and separation. The story of Joseph and his brothers depict a reconciliation that does not necessarily lie in loving those around us (it definitely does not lie in hating them either). The spirit of reconciliation lies in the search – not for the things that separate humankind – but for something common among fellow human beings (Gobodo-Madikizela 2014:1). That is, the story depicts reconciliation as the coming together, staying together and growing together of warring parties for the sake of building a common future. Therefore, the reconciliation of Joseph as a framework for preaching reconciliation entails using the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to introduce into people's imagination the possibility of people, families, communities, ethnic groups and religions in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria coming together, staying together and growing together. Mbachaga (2012:5) beautifully captures this notion: "Building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging. It is about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose."

Preaching reconciliation thus means helping people to acquire the vision of embracing one another without religious or ethnic distinction. It also includes embracing the importance of staying together without using religion or ethnic affiliation to exclude, marginalise or segregate. It involves focusing on what unites rather than what divides people. In terms of my Nigerian

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context, it means developing a strong will by all people in the Middle Belt region to live together in the region and to tolerate one another. This may serve as a vehicle for establishing a united community, which may provide a unique, powerful basis for allegiance instead of disintegration (Lumun 2012:58).

The reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers focuses on building the future of the sons of Jacob as the chosen people of God. For example, the survival of Jacob's family in the midst of famine became the basis of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. This means that the way Joseph and his brothers treated one another in the past no longer matters; rather, what matters is the preservation of Jacob's family in the midst of famine. This insight is significant for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, where there is a need to help people confront the challenge of poverty that is common among communities in the region (see 2.4.5.1 and 2.4.5.2). Rasak Musbau (2014) aptly argues that:

> The Nigerian people must know that the poverty, ignorance, and disease which oppress the working masses today, do not recognize ethnic, language, religious or regional differences. Hunger does not know whether you are a Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Longuda, Birom, Ogoja, Tiv, Gbagyi, Efik, Kanuri, Chip, Annang, Izon, Nupe, etc. A disease does not find out whether you are a Muslim, a Christian or An African religionist just as hunger, poverty, and ignorance do not care whether you come from North, South, East or West. Poverty, disease, and ignorance attack primarily the masses.

Even though conflict and violence caused by divisive ethnicity and religion might have created wounds and pain in the life of many people, the focus should rather be on how to survive the challenge of unemployment that is rampant among the people of the Middle Belt region (see 2.4.5). Moreover, poverty is causing the youth in the region to become tools in the hands of politicians and some religious leaders during conflict and violence (see 2.4.4). Mbachaga (2012:8) laments that the "[p]olitical elite recruit young people to do their dirty jobs instead of molding them into responsible leaders of tomorrow". Joseph and his brothers were able to overcome the famine that threatened the survival of Jacob's family because they reconciled their differences and stayed together. The challenge of poverty needs to be engaged through creating a

mental picture in the mind of people of how to convert the abundant natural resources with which God endowed the Middle Belt region into use.

Akin to the survival of Jacob's family in the midst of famine, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as staying together and growing together. This means how Joseph and his brothers treated one another in the past did not count, but what matters to them most is staying together and building a community that will fulfil God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is significant for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and may help shape people's imagination in contemplating ways in which they might improve life in the Middle Belt region. For example, hospitals are inefficient and ineffective; electricity is seriously lacking and in some places is totally absent. Education is very inadequate, especially in the rural areas. Lumun (2012:55) aptly captures the decaying situation in the following words:

> Roads still remain as bad as they were. The country is still facing the problem of the electric power supply which is supposed to generate employment for millions of Nigerians. On different occasions, the country had a huge budget to address the issue but trillions of Naira ends into the pockets of few politicians. Employment in the country is strictly who knows who (i.e. connection) not on merit, even in our institutions of higher learning. This may partly account for the falling standard of education in Nigeria.

Because of insecurity, many people are afraid to become involved in business, something that could create job opportunities for thousands of people. Even farming, which provides employment and the only means of survival for many in the Middle Belt region, is seriously being affected by insecurity. There are no industries to process the farm products, especially ginger, mangoes, oranges and more, thereby discouraging people, especially the youth, from farming. These are some of the issues that people, ethnic groups and religions in the Middle Belt region should tackle together. It is rather unfortunate that many of these things are either caused or exacerbated by divisive ethnicity and religious conflict (see more on this in the next chapter).

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5.5.5 THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN THE NARRATIVE OF GENESIS 37-50

From a faith perspective, the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers focuses on God's purpose for calling Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is an important theological perspective to proclaim that God led the sons of Jacob from strife, antagonism, conflict and separation to a change of thought, change of action, forgiveness, coming together, staying together, and growing together for this purpose. In this regard, Achtemeier (1989:63) argues that "God is at work in the Joseph stories, hidden behind all the hatred and deception of the brothers and behind all the temptations and imprisonment and successes of Joseph in Egypt. God is at work to keep his promise to make Israel a great nation and a blessing in the midst of the earth".

It is also an important theological perspective to proclaim focusing on God's plan for humankind as a great source of forgiveness and reconciliation. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the source of Joseph's forgiveness is an unbending focus on God's plan for his life. Twice Joseph is depicted as not focusing on how his brothers hurt and maltreated him in the past; rather, he focuses on how God turned the evil of humankind for good. So in Gen 45:5 we read Joseph's insightful words to his brothers: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." And, in Gen 50:19-20, Joseph says to his brothers: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." This means that, when humankind focuses on God's plan for their life, they will be able to show compassion instead of marginalisation and discrimination. When the focus is on God's plan there will be forgiveness instead of revenge. When God's plan becomes the cardinal focus, people will accept, live with and prosper together irrespective of ethnic and religious differences. In addition, there will be no barbaric killing, no maiming, no hewing and no chopping off of parts of human bodies in the name of religious difference.

Furthermore, focusing on God's plan inculcates a sense of purpose in Joseph. That is, in a most significant way, Joseph saw himself as an agent of God's grace and kindness towards his brothers (Berthoud 2008:9). This is why, when he revealed himself to his brothers, he did not just overlook the evil done to him in the past, but he is depicted as focusing on God's plan for sending him to Egypt – the survival of the family of Jacob. So we read in Genesis 45:7: "But

God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." And in Genesis 45:7; 50:20 Joseph said: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." In this episode, Joseph tells his brothers that all that has happened in the past is a means of making him God's agent for the survival of the family. This is very important to the youth in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, especially the boys (see 2.4.5.2), who are pushed into doing all forms of evil activities to earn a living. In other words, irrespective of economic hardship, God created them to be agents of sustaining life. God created them to be agents of positive change in the Middle Belt region, not destruction.

At the heart of this understanding is God's promise to Abraham, namely that the descendants of Abraham will become a great nation, possessing the promised land and becoming a blessing to other nations. It is important when preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria that the idea that places and land belong to certain ethnic groups or religions is discouraged. Rather, God created the Middle Belt region for his glory. This means the region as a whole and all the human beings and natural resources in it exist for the glory of God. It is not how one ethnic group or religion treated another in the past that matters; what counts is serving the purpose for which God created the region. Therefore the focus of every person, ethnic group and religion is a commitment toward glorifying God in every aspect of life.

5.6 CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the chapter it was argued that reconciliation is a process. The understanding that reconciliation is a process is depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. For example, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as having undergone transformation or a change of view. That is, a transformation from the point of view of killing to the point of view of sustaining life. Joseph's brothers' transformation of their point of view is pictured in their confession of how they treated Joseph when they were selling him into slavery. Joseph is also depicted as showing a change in point of view in the manner he allowed nine of his brothers to take food to the starving Jacob family and also gave provisions to his brothers for the journey to Canaan.

Besides the change in point of view, another sign of transformation as a process of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is a change of action. Joseph's brothers are

depicted showing a change of action when Benjamin was considered a thief. For example, after the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack, signifying that he would become Joseph's slave, Joseph's brothers loaded their donkeys and returned to Egypt with Benjamin, instead of abandoning him as they did to Joseph. In addition, Judah, when talking to Joseph, revealed how leaving Benjamin in Egypt would affect their father. In the end, Judah offered to become Joseph's slave in the place of Benjamin. Joseph's brothers' actions in this episode depict them as being committed to the well-being of their brother Benjamin and Jacob their father.

Another process of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is forgiveness. Joseph is depicted as having forgiven his brothers without any demand for confession of the evil done in the past. As a matter of fact, he focuses his forgiveness on how God turned the evil done to him by his brothers into the saving of human life – their lives inclusive. Joseph did not blame, scold, accuse or in any way make his brothers feel guilty because of how they treated him in the past.

Actual reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, however, is depicted in how the sons of Jacob walked into the future together. For example, Joseph and his brothers became united after many years of strife and separation for the survival of Jacob's family in the midst of famine. The coming together of the sons of Jacob depicts the reconciliation of the brothers, because reconciliation demands the coming together of a warring party or parties. Furthermore, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as staying together in the region of Goshen in Egypt. This signifies that, after many years of conflict and separation, the sons of Jacob did not only come together but they stayed together. In addition, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as growing and prospering together. That is, they did not only come together and stay together, but they grew together, thereby fulfilling God's promise of making the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob a great nation.

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are confronted with the reality that conflict in a broken community is a vice to overcome. And one of the means is using the narrative of Genesis 37-50 as imageries for preaching reconciliation. In other words, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers may be used in preaching to fill people's minds with images of what it means to be reconciled and live a harmonious life. This is because the story may empower people to

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imaginatively try a new life, a new community, and a new worldview. Moreover, reconciliation demands a process of shaping the imagination of hatred, anger and thoughts of revenge into thoughts of life. As such, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation means using preaching to create an imagination of sustaining life that will help people to constructs a mental picture of sustaining human life.

Furthermore, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts Joseph's brothers sacrificing their freedom for the freedom of Benjamin and the well-being of Jacob their father. Therefore, the reconciliation of Josepha and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation means using preaching as a process of reconciliation to help people acquire the vision of taking responsibility for their fellow human beings; in other words human beings becoming their brothers' keepers, not their brothers' killers. In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts how Joseph forgave his brothers without demanding for confession of the evil done in the past. This means the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation means using the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in preaching to dismantle imagination that focuses on hurt, wounds, pain and anguish inflicted in the past and to enthrone imagination of acceptance, accommodation, unity and social cohesion.

In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts the sons of Jacob coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation. Therefore the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation means using preaching to help people in the Middle Belt region to acquire a vision of embracing one another, irrespective of ethnic and religious differences. This includes walking into the future together. For example, issues like poverty, mass unemployment, inefficient electricity, poor healthcare services, inadequate security and many others need communal tackling.

In the next chapter, the study will consider how various preaching techniques may be used to promote reconciliation and social cohesion – pastoral preaching, prophetic preaching, economic preaching, biographical preaching, and preaching reconciliation as a lament. The aim is to explore how these preaching techniques may be used to guide the people of the Middle Belt region through the aspect of reconciliation found in the narrative of Genesis 37-50.

Chapter 6

The Preaching Techniques of Preaching Reconciliation

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the study considered the way in which the healing of society manifests itself in terms of reconciliation in the story of Joseph and his brothers. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers we are enabled to see various aspects of reconciliation in action. That is, characters in the story exhibit characteristics of transformation or change that enables reconciliation and forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past, and the characters are depicted as coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation, serving as a symbol of true reconciliation. The study also examined how preaching can be a channel for guiding people through the process of reconciliation by using images of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to shape the imagination of the hearer.

In Chapter 6, however, the study considers how reconciliation may be preached using different preaching techniques, namely pastoral preaching, prophetic preaching, economic preaching, biographical preaching, and preaching reconciliation as a lament. The aim is to explore how these preaching techniques may be used to guide the people through the aspect of reconciliation found in the narrative of Genesis 37-50. That is, transformation or change of thoughts and actions that enable reconciliation, forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past and coming together, staying together and growing together as a symbol of true reconciliation.

Since preaching is an aspect of church activities, the study therefore will consider the role of the church in promoting reconciliation, before looking at how reconciliation may be preached in a situation of division, conflict and violence, and that will be done in the next section.

6.2 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PROMOTING RECONCILIATION

The Christian religion exists primarily to worship and adore God. It must praise His most Holy Name. But it can never use this as a form of escapism from participating in promoting reconciliation in the world which God created and loved so much that He gave his only begotten

son for it (Tutu 1984:84). This means reconciliation is the mission and very quality of the church. The message of reconciliation and peace is central to the church of Jesus Christ, where she may be found. God endowed the church with different gifts for the purpose of reconciliation and promoting social cohesion. For example, some people are gifted and called to be in the intentional social transformation, which is caring for widows and orphans, visiting those in prison, or seeking to change those aspects of society that fuel division, conflict and violence (Dayton 1987:59).

In the case of the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria, Christianity is the only institution that has structures that penetrate every corner of the region. Furthermore, Christianity is the dominant religion in the region. What is more, the only common identity that the multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, multilingual and multicultural Middle Belters have is Christianity (see 2.2). Therefore it can be argued that the church is the institution that is well positioned to promote reconciliation and social cohesion among diverse ethnic groups, diverse tribes and diverse religions in the Middle Belt region. The following are ways in which the church can promote reconciliation in the Middle Belt region.[52]

6.2.1 THE CHURCH AS AN EMBODIMENT OF RECONCILIATION

The church as an embodiment of reconciliation is rooted in what constituted her. In other words, the formation of the church is an embodiment of reconciliation. This is because the church is a

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[52] Over the years the church had been actively involved in reconciliation in a situation of division, conflict and violence. For example, the church in Zimbabwe during and after the colonial era played a role in promoting social cohesion. Munemo and Nciizah (2014:63) testified that the church in Zimbabwe was involved in peace and harmonious coexistence during and after the colonial era: Under colonial rule, the church promoted peaceful and harmonious existence between various racial and social groups in the society. It played an active role in the war of liberation, denouncing racial segregation, human rights abuses and other excesses of the state. It was targeted by the state for providing moral and diplomatic support to African nationalists who struggled against injustice from the white minority regime. In the post-colonial period, the Church has been married to the oppressed people in the fight against post-colonial repressive laws and elements promoting human rights.

What is more, although the church in Rwanda had been blaming for remaining aloof during the genocide that lasted for one hundred days and claimed the lives of about 800 000 people, research has shown that church leaders and members were injured, while some lost their lives in the process of trying to intervene in the genocide (Sundqvist 2011:160-161). In addition, churches like the Pentecostal Movement (ADEPR) were very active in the reconciliation process in post-genocide in Rwanda. For example, the church emphasised the *Practice of Repentance* where perpetrators were encouraged to confess their crimes in prisons, in church, and in the local Gacaca processes (Sundqvist 2011:168). The church also embarked on *reconciliation through Prison Outreach.* That is, churches organised outreach programmes in prisons which resulted to perpetrators confessing their crimes in local Gacaca sessions (Sundqvist 2011:171).

messianic community of Christian believers who come from different backgrounds and walks of life, and for whom Christ destroyed the enmity and divisions that exist among them. Stated differently, the church is a community of believers from different ethnic groups, tribes, races and nationalities for whom Christ destroyed the walls, barriers, boundaries and frontiers that exist among them. This new community transcends any human classification, race, tribe, nationality, etc. People of the church community are born from division and diversity into oneness in Christ. In this new community, there are no strangers or aliens, because both are brothers and sisters in Christ. This means members of the church community are to reflect not their ethnic, tribal or national differences and qualities, but their newfound unity and oneness in Christ. They cannot live in the church community with their old ethnic, tribal values, attitudes and practices (Turaki 2001:174-175). This means the church is supposed to be a place where people experience acceptance, accommodation, integration and fullness of fellowship among human beings created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, it can be argued that God instituted the church to embody reconciliation. That is to practise, speak and live a message of reconciliation (Sundqvist 2011:166). This can be seen in how God embodied reconciliation in Christ. As De Gruchy (2002:83) says: "God did not simply speak the word of reconciliation through a prophet, but the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us." De Gruchy further argues that God's reconciliation of the world was not an idea, an abstract doctrine or utopian thinking, but something embodied in the life of Jesus. This means God embodied reconciliation by becoming a man through Jesus Christ so that he may reconcile man to himself. As such, the church as a community of people who have experienced the reconciliation of God through Jesus Christ is expected to embody reconciliation in their relationships with one another.

For example, in the early church, reconciliation was embodied in the commonality of believers. In other words, the unity of believers in the early church extended beyond spiritual matters to physical and material matters. They owned personal possessions but they did not consider them private possessions. Rather, they viewed their belongings as common (Adelakun 2010:2). This means reconciliation permeated the life and being of people in the early church so that there was no individual self-centeredness, ethnic sentiments or religious parochialism. All people shared things in common. If the early church was to have an election, employment or if there was any

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opportunity to be given, there would not have been a display of ethnic sentiment, marginalisation, discrimination or exclusion. This is because the early church embodied reconciliation in its relationship with one another.

In addition, the church as an embodiment of reconciliation, particularly in a situation of division, conflict and violence, means taking Jesus' exemplary life from the Sermon on the Mount. That is, to pursue love of enemies instead of their destruction, unconditional forgiveness instead of retaliation, readiness to suffer instead of using force, a blessing for peacemakers instead of hymns of hate and revenge (Kajom 2015:255). And elsewhere, Kajom considers the radical love preached by Jesus as another means the church can embody reconciliation. In other words, you should love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you (Luke 6:2-6) (Kajom 2015:273). Nell (2014:761) adds that the "church is a radical community, shaped by what Jesus did on the cross. This means that people are to be loved unconditionally and forgiven and served because this is what Christ has done for us". The church can also embody reconciliation by refusing to return evil for evil, living in peace, sharing goods, and doing deeds of charity as opportunities arise. This is because church life is based on the conviction that God calls Christians to imitate the way of Christ in his absolute obedience, even if it leads to their death (Kajom 2015:279).

6.2.2 THE CHURCH AS ONE BIG FAMILY OF GOD

Another means by which the church may promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region is through constant celebrations of ethnic and tribal diversity as one big family of God. In this regard, Tutu (2011:50) argues that:

> We are made to exist in a life that should be marked by cooperation, interdependence, sharing, caring, compassion, and complementarity. We should celebrate our diversity; we should exult in our differences as making not for separation and alienation and hostility but for their glorious opposites. The law of our being is to live in solidarity, friendship, helpfulness, unselfishness, interdependence, and complementarity, as sisters and brothers in one family, human family, God's family.

This means the real question is not how to eradicate ethnicity and tribalism, but how to integrate them into social relationships. In other words, the church should be committed toward turning ethnic and tribal diversity into a fruitful and rewarding resource that can be used to enrich the concept of nationhood (Mwaura 2009:26). This is a conviction shared by Maigadi (2006:1), who says that "ethnic diversity of the church [is] supposed to be a cause for celebration because faith in the Lord Jesus Christ had dismantles all ethnic, racial and socio-economic barriers".

Therefore, to promote reconciliation and social cohesion, Van der Merwe (2003) suggests that the church should organise symbolic events, such as mass gatherings, memorial services, marches and public celebrations that will constantly bring people of diverse ethnic and tribal groups together. Such gatherings will educate members to have a proper understanding of the nature of the church as one family of God (Maigadi 2006:192). That is, all Christians should live as brothers and sisters because they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Maigadi 2006:199).

The practice of celebrating ethnic and tribal diversity as a family of God in the Middle Belt can be implemented through the use of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which has a structure that penetrates every level of society in the region. For example, there are Federal, State, Local Government and District branches, with leadership at each level. The existence of the CAN structure of fellowship is a great avenue that can be used by the Christian religion to promote reconciliation and social cohesion by constantly bringing diverse ethnic and tribal groups together as a family of God.

Besides the Christian Association of Nigeria, which is an inter-denominational fellowship, most of the church denominations have structures that can be used to practise the celebration of ethnic and tribal diversity as a family of God in different ways. For example, the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) has structures like Local Church Boards (LCB), Local Church Councils (LCC), District Church Councils (DCC) and General Church Councils (GCC). Each level has different categories of leaders, like church leaders, men fellowship leaders, women fellowship leaders, and youth fellowship leaders. These structures may be used as a great tool by the church to promote reconciliation and social cohesion through organising events that may constantly help people do what Maigadi calls the expression of the agape relationship among members of one

family of God. In other words, they will be demonstrating, so that the world will know, that the church is the body of God, a new creation, and a new people of God. Maigadi (2006:218) argues that, when a community of believers actively puts agape into action, the problem of ethnic and tribal divisions, conflicts and violence will be minimised. They will detest ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence, because it is not part of the nature of God.

6.2.3 CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AS A CATALYST FOR RECONCILIATION

Another mechanism by which the church can promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the context of multi-ethnicity, multi-tribal, multi-denominational and multi-religion, is Christian identity. According to Mwaura (2009), Christian identity applies to each and every Christian, irrespective of race, class, age, geographical location or denominational affiliation. This implies that all Christians acquire an inalienable identity of equality that transcends all other cultural or national identities. Christian identity also neutralises all other identity traits in their discriminatory tendencies based on race, class, sex, etc. It subsumes and transforms them into the new identity of God's children, giving "a sameness of identity in Christ since all become one person in Christ" (Gal. 3:28; Mwaura 2009:20). Turaki aptly argues that, in order to avert the recurrence of ethnic/tribal violence and conflict, the church in Africa must embark upon serious Biblical living and practice so that humanity is given a new definition through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. That is, through the redemptive work of Christ, ethnic/tribal identity will be transformed; its enmity and hostility will be destroyed and turned into a blessing to others. Ethnic/tribal differences are not to be exploited to serve evil self-centeredness but must be used for good works of serving humanity (Turaki 2001:175-177).

As a matter of fact, focusing on Christian identity may help the church in the Middle Belt region to combat the traditional African concept of ethnicity, namely the use of ancestral blood group of kinship and communal values to discriminate against and exclude others. This is because, in Christ, all are insiders, all belong, all are entitled to equal treatment, ownership, affinity, loyalty and obligation, all are entitled to community rights and protection, and the commonwealth. In Christian identity, the common denominator for all members of every clan or ethnic group/tribe is Christ, who is the ancestor, the progenitor of all. Christian identity engenders affinity, obligations and loyalty of one to the family of God and all humankind created in the image of God. Christian identity's philosophical and ethical view of life and the world is universalistic and

not particularistic. One belongs to the community of believers bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. This helps people to live freely as a community and contribute to the spiritual, physical, economic and social development of the community.

What is more, Christian identity may help to overcome the controversial issue of indigene and settler, which had cause massive destruction of lives and properties worth billions of naira in Nigeria and the Middle Belt region in particular. For, in Christianity, there is no indigene or settler, because all are citizens of God's kingdom. And the core value of the citizens of God's kingdom is mutual love among them. This mutual love cuts across barriers of race, class and sex, for the first Christian community, which came into existence at Pentecost, consisted of people "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Despite various moral challenges and cultural diversity (Acts 5), the early Christian community attempted to live as brothers and sisters. Both the evangelist and evangelised shared a common Christian identity in Christ and strove to live accordingly (Mwaura 2009:21).

Van der Merwe (2003) reports that one of the ways the church can promote reconciliation is to provide guidance regarding the values and journey of reconciliation through sermons.[53] Therefore the next section will look at various studies on how preaching may serve as a guide to the journey of reconciliation.

6.3 HOMILETICAL REFLECTIONS ON PREACHING RECONCILIATION

Over the years, homileticians have offered helpful perspectives to congregations and preachers pondering reconciliation and social cohesion in a context of division, conflict and violence. The following are considered relevant to the study.

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[53] Van der Merwe's study was done against the background of the Church in South Africa, which fought for liberation and then became confused. It was as if the church did not know what to do. The enemy was gone. The church could not pinpoint the enemy. Therefore, his study used interviews conducted by Bernard Spong (alongside previous research by him) to examine the way the church interacted with the TRC and how this has affected the approach of the church in addressing the challenge of reconciliation. He discovered that the task of overcoming social divisions and (re)building relationships in a democratic South Africa is something that is now seen by society and by church leaders as a key part of the church's role (Van der Merwe 2003).

6.3.1 HOMILETICAL APPROACH TO THE CONTEXT OF XENOPHOBIA

In relation to xenophobia, Nell proposes the type of preaching that may help to combat this phenomenon in South Africa. In an article entitled "The Tears of Xenophobia: Preaching and Violence from a South African Perspective", Nell (2009) suggest three ways preaching can guide listeners to reconciliation. The first step is preaching unity (taking hands), which means that preaching should show different ways in which people can and must "take hands" through accepting "otherness". Hence, in a country with so much diversity and a history of "enclavement" it is important never to stop issuing the prophetic call to cross, with open arms, the many different boundaries separating people (Nell 2009:240).

Furthermore, Nell suggests preaching forgiveness (reconciliation). Preaching has to do with a call to faithfulness and spiritual renewal characterised by a genuine love for others (1 Cor. 2:13-16). The prophetic preaching on reconciliation and forgiveness must be accompanied by initiatives illustrating the importance of and need to revisit the past through narrative and storytelling. Preaching must create spaces where people feel safe to bring the victim and victimisers into authentic relationships characterised by the acknowledgment of past injustices and the willingness on both sides to engage in a process of forgiveness and reconciliation (Nell 2009:241).

Another means of preaching reconciliation proposed by Nell is preaching the concept of "giving back the bicycle" (justice). Nell (2009:242) uses the following quote from an unemployed, thirty-something father and member of the Uniting Reformed Church in Khayelitsha to illustrate the concept of giving back the bicycle: "White people, I wish you can understand that we don't want your houses, your money or your jobs … we want your hearts, your friendship, your love. We want you!" That is, preaching on the underlying causes of divisions (of which injustice is the biggest one) can help to facilitate the processes of reconciliation in imaginative ways (Nell, 2009:242-243).

6.3.2 HOMILETICAL APPROACH TO CONTEXT OF POST-APARTHEID

South Africa has been going through a movement from *Ubuntu* to *Into*, that is a situation in which people often treat one another not as human beings, but as things (Cilliers 2008:7). Cilliers proposes the types of preaching that may contribute towards the restoration of *Ubuntu* as

humanness, as humanity towards humans in South Africa, preaching that will raise a prophetic voice against all forms of treating fellow human beings like things (Cilliers 2013:12). One of these is preaching as *inter-facing*. That is, preaching in post-apartheid South Africa has to find, or create, spaces for facing and interfacing. Preachers in this context will have to be embodied border-crossers, not only moving out of their studies into the world(s) of the congregation, but also across cultural and ideological borders (Cilliers 2013:15).

In addition, Cilliers suggests that preaching in South Africa should be *inter-forming*. Preaching should focus on helping people to have the willingness for inter-forming, the willingness to be fundamentally changed in the process. Interfacing is being open to being transformed by the encounter with the other. Interfacing is about giving and losing yourself for the sake of the other and, in the process, also finding and discovering yourself (Cilliers 2013:16-17). Furthermore, Cilliers advocates preaching as *inter-flow*. That is, preaching in post-apartheid South Africa will have to demythologise whatever new, destructive myths may appear on the scene. This will have to be an ongoing process, a perpetual inter-flow, in which supposed fixed beliefs and notions on all sides of the South African spectrum are scrutinised and held up to the light (Cilliers 2013:17).

6.3.3 HOMILETICAL APPROACH TO THE CONTEXT OF ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Ekong (2011:78) proposes the kind of preaching demanded by the context of ethnic violence in Calabar in Nigeria. That is a context full of hunger, hurt, bitterness, pain, helplessness, nakedness, homelessness and poverty. Victims of ethnic violence squatting in many rural communities in the Calabar area are deprived of human dignity, with people being pushed to begging, human trafficking and prostitution, and some are susceptible to crime and criminal activities. Ekong therefore suggests three types of preaching as a means of combating the above phenomenon. That is, "[p]reaching that transforms the mindset from individualism to communalism". In other words, preaching in the context of ethnic violence should call to mind the communal way of life, which is typically African, and in particular the philosophical concept of "*owo edi inyene*" ("humanity or man is wealth"), as a paradigm for transformative preaching in the context of ethnic violence in the Calabar area in particular, and in Nigeria in general (Ekong 2011:81-82).

In addition, Ekong suggests preaching that transforms the mindset to that of Christ. That is, preaching should promote the kind of love that makes a Christian see a Moslem as one created by God whom he would not dare to hurt during conflict. This kind of preaching changes the mindset of people or communities by promoting love and discouraging communal and ethnic violence at the slightest provocation or disagreement. It rather, by provoking concern for people who hurt, with a view to offer forgiveness in place of retaliation and revenge, seeks peaceful resolution of conflict through non-violent actions (Ekong 2011:85). Finally, Ekong considers preaching that transforms social structures and calls for justice as a way of combating ethnic violence. In other words, the task is to raise a prophetic voice against violence and injustice by proclaiming the gospel of Christ to listeners through teaching and preaching, and the ministry should encourage transformative, non-violent action as a serious option if social transformation and justice must occur (Ekong 2011:87).

In the same manner, the study aims suggest the type of preaching that will be meaningful to the context of divisive ethnicity and religion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Claypool (1980:28) says preaching should catch the attention of all the faculties of human beings. Preaching should involve the listeners' minds and bodies and emotions, as well as their tongues and ears. Preaching should be an event because it is something that happens holistically. And preaching should leave an impact on the listener that accompanies participation in any sort of decisive happening. As such, the next section will consider prophetic preaching as a mechanism for preaching reconciliation.

6.4 PROPHETIC PREACHING OF RECONCILIATION

One of the preaching techniques the study believes may offer a helpful way of promoting reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is prophetic preaching. Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm (cited in Tisdale 2010) considers prophetic preaching to be preaching that proclaims God's Word from within the Christian tradition against all that threatens God's reconciling intention for humanity and for all that creates and sustains a vital and necessary ministry of compassion for neighbours near and far. She argues that prophetic preaching is not exclusively either moral exhortation or prediction regarding future events, but prophetic preaching envisions past, present and future concerns within the context of preaching (Ottoni-Wilhelm cited in Tisdale 2010:9).

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (2010) defines prophetic preaching as preaching rooted in the biblical witness of both the prophets of the Old Testament and in the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth. This is preaching that is countercultural and challenges the status quo. This preaching is concerned with the evils and shortcomings of the present social order and is often focused on corporate and public issues, naming what is not of God, and offers hope of a new day to come and the promise of the liberation to God's oppressed people (Tisdale 2010:10). From the above definitions, the study considers prophetic preaching of reconciliation in the following ways:

6.4.1 PREACHING AGAINST MENTALITY OF SUPERIORITY

The prophetic preaching of reconciliation includes, but is not limited to, proclaiming God's Word against all that promotes and encourages all forms of division, conflict and violence. That is, prophetic preaching is an act of criticising the old order, and sometimes even pronouncing a death sentence upon it (Tisdale 2006). Preaching as a challenge to superior mentality means preaching that confronts ethnic and religious superiority. In other words, the study considers prophetic preaching as proclaiming God's Word in a situation where some people feel superior to other people, ethnic groups and religions because of their ethnic or religious affiliations.

The attitude of superiority is depicted in how Joseph presented his two dreams to his brothers (see 4.4.2 and 4.5.2). So we read in Genesis 37:6, 9 that Joseph said to his brothers, "Listen to this dream I had", and a second time, "Listen I had another dream". As Olson (2010:27-28) argues, "Joseph adds to the brothers' jealousy and hatred by reporting to them two dreams that imply that all of Joseph's brothers and even his parents will one day bow down before him". This means the dreams create in Joseph a feeling of superiority over his brothers.

Among some ethnic groups in the Middle Belt region, stories are often told in the oral tradition about the relationship of enslavement and the feeling of superiority of one ethnic group over the other, especially the larger and stronger ones over the weaker ones. The unfortunate situation is that some people who have refused to let go of parochial sentiments in the Middle Belt region still relate to other ethnic groups, religious groups and cultures on the basis of superior–inferior complexes, as portrayed in attitudes of masters versus slaves (Daniel 2014:28). To make the situation worse, various selfish leaders have manipulated people by placing emphasis on this parochial sentiment of ethnic and religious egocentrism. This explains why some

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political campaigns are based on ethnicity, regionalism and religion, using propaganda of telling people that certain political or some public positions belong to certain ethnic or religious groups. As a result, ethnicity and religion have become a strong weapon used by selfish elites to manipulate and divide the people.[54] This they do by telling their ethnic or religious group that they are the only qualifying candidate, simply because they hold onto the notion that they are the superior ethnic or religious group. This has caused a lot of harm to the Middle Belt region. It has shattered the unity of people and turns their attention away from the urgent and real matters of public interest. It has also created unhealthy competition that produces the re-occurrence of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence.

Therefore prophetic preaching of reconciliation should confront the elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion that promotes marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion in the name of ethnic, tribal and religious egocentrism. The study considers a sermon preached by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah (2012), the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Dioceses, at the funeral service of Mr Patrick Yakowa, the erstwhile Governor of Kaduna state of Nigeria, as prophetic preaching:

> The event (Mr Patrick Yakowa becoming a governor in Kaduna State) was historic because it temporarily closed the door to what has been one of the worst shows of selfishness by an unproductive and selfish cabal who have deployed religion to hide their greed. From the creation of Kaduna State in 1987, the Northern ruling class, by policy seemed to have erected an invisible sign that read: No Christians Need Apply to enter what would later be called Kashim Ibrahim House or represent the State at the highest levels. Despite the fact that all states were opened to Christian military officers, it was only Kaduna and perhaps Sokoto states that were never governed by non-Muslims.

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[54] The elites' manipulation has dragged Nigeria into deeper socio-economic chaos. This they have done through manipulating ethnic, tribal, religious and regional sentiments to legitimate their otherwise tenuous hold on power. Sadly, a lot of Nigerians have become victims of these manipulations. For example, are those who willingly turn themselves into suicide bombers on behalf of Boko Haram not victims of this kind of manipulation? Is there not a strong possibility that the millions of ordinary youths in Nigeria, and in the Middle Belt region in particular, who are always at the forefront of ethnic and religious violence, are victims of psychological and ideological manipulation that convinces them that their existential material conditions will improve dramatically with the emergence of some people in power?

This policy of exclusion against non-Muslims turned Kaduna State into a political mecca and laid the foundation for the unnecessary and sad religious tensions that have continued to dog the state. This is why a routine change like a Deputy Governor taking over from a Governor would generate such ripples across the country. It also has created the climate for the anxiety, fear, and suspicion that destroyed the foundations of Christian-Muslims relations.

The Bishop in the above homily proclaimed God's Word against all that promotes and encourages all forms of division, conflict and violence. He criticised the old order, even pronouncing a death sentence upon it. That is, he criticised the manipulation of ethnic and religious differences by elites of northern extraction that promotes religious and ethnic egocentrism and invariably leads to religious and ethnic conflict and violence. The homily challenged the status quo that used ethnic and religious differences to discriminate, marginalise and exclude others. This is the type of preaching that the study advocates – proclaiming the word of God against the feeling of superiority that creates divisive ethnicity, religions and tribes, which is very common among the people of the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

Christianity is the only institution that has structures that have penetrated every corner of the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. And there is no institution that has an audience like churches. Every week, and sometimes every day, people attend worship service and one Christian gathering or the other. This is to me a great privilege for preachers to promote reconciliation through the use of prophetic preaching at all levels of society, preaching that confidently and boldly criticises the old order, and even pronounces a death sentence upon it. In other words, through preaching, people may be helped to see how ethnic, tribal and religious superiority is a manipulation of certain individuals for selfish aims. What is more, preaching may help people to know they are being used to create unnecessary suffering and afflictions on their poor fellow human beings through religious and ethnic conflict and violence.

6.4.2 PREACHING AGAINST CORRUPTION

Another aspect of the prophetic preaching of reconciliation is proclaiming God's Word against the use of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence as a hiding place for selfish acts of corruption. Stated differently, ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence are sometimes

created by the elite to divert people's attention from their selfishness and corruption. This means prophetic preaching against corruption should help people to see the elite's selfish and corrupt activities that are hiding beneath ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence. The selfishness that characterises the elite in Nigeria is depicted in how the brothers treated Joseph (see 4.4.2 and 4.5.2). So we read in Genesis 37:23-24 that "[t]hey stripped him of his robe – the ornate robe he was wearing – and they took him and threw him into the cistern". And in Genesis 37:28 we are told: "So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt." In this episode, Joseph's brothers were selfish because their determination to get rid of Joseph rubbed them of any human feeling of compassion toward the pain and suffering of Joseph, and even the pain and sorrow of their father. In other words, Joseph's brothers were committed to achieving their goal without being mindful of the pain and suffering they were causing fellow human beings created in the image of God (see section 4.5.5).

In Nigeria, selfishness that characterises a lack of concern for the suffering of fellow human beings can be seen in the culture of corruption that is very rampant in the country. Dike (2008) says even mad people on the street recognise the havoc caused by corruption, as the funds allocated for their welfare disappear into thin air. The reference to mad people on the street acknowledging corruption is Dike's way of saying that corruption is pandemic in Nigeria, where both leaders and followers are corrupt (Daniel 2014:40). Aluko (2008:6) also observes that there is the illegal and greedy acquisition of public funds for private pockets, which otherwise would have been invested for the public good. As a result, infrastructural facilities have faltered. The few rich have grown richer but become more corrupt. It is selfishness that makes people divert funds meant for infrastructure, like good medical care, roads, schools, electricity, security and services that promote human well-being, into private pockets. This is selfishness because such people focus on enriching themselves, without being mindful of the pain and suffering caused by their actions. In addition, such people are selfish because, in their desperation to hide their corrupt activities, they create ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence that deepen the pain and suffering of poor people.

As such, prophetic preaching against the selfishness of corruption should help people see how ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence are sometimes created to provide a haven for corruption and failed governance. As a matter of fact, the study considers Bishop Kukah's (2012) prophetic preaching as a type of preaching that creates awareness among poor masses who are being used as political tools by the elite to achieve selfish and egocentric aims. This is because, as Bishop Kukah posits, the problem of Nigeria is not diverse ethnic groups, diverse tribes or diverse religions, but corruption. Therefore the Bishop, in his prophetic sermon, berated the corrupt politicians that had robbed Nigerian politics of being committed and dedicated to promoting the good of Nigerians:

> Sadly, today, years and years of corruption and abuse of office have turned the otherwise noble profession and vocation of politics into a dark temple where money and power occupy the pantheons and enlist worshippers. The result is that rather than seeking men and women of honor for public office, our country has lost a sense of a common vision for creating the Good society. Nigerians have now developed a navel-gazing and incestuous view of power that feeds on primordial sentiments. We no longer trust the Other, only those who worship with us, speak to us, can be trusted to represent us. Today, Nigerians believe that the only good public office holder is not the one who is most qualified, the most honest, the one with the greatest capacity to do good, but rather, the one who is a member of our circle of greed.

6.4.3 PREACHING AS AN OFFER OF HOPE FOR A NEW DAY TO COME

Division, conflicts and violence create pain, trauma, anguish and all types of unfavourable conditions in the life of people. In the situation in the Middle Belt region, however, one of the greatest wounds created by ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflicts and violence is the imaginative thinking of hopelessness based on ethnic, tribal and religious affiliation. That is, people make assumptions base on the imagination that they come from a minority ethnic group, tribe or religion, and as such they cannot achieve anything. This is what the study considers as being locked up in the prison of a victimhood mindset. The victimhood mentality can be seen in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, when Joseph's brothers thought within them that

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"[w]hat if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us for all the wrong we did him" (Genesis 50:15). Their attitude displayed a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness based on assumption. Sometimes, due to past occurrences, people lock themselves up in a prison of victimhood mentally. We are not told in the Bible how long Joseph's brothers imprisoned themselves in the assumption that Joseph holds a grudge against them.

The Middle Belt region is fertile ground for a victimhood mentality because it is a region with too many minority ethnic groups. In every society there are some ethnic groups or tribes that blame one or more ethnic groups for marginalising, excluding and discriminating against them. Sometimes, people, ethnic groups, tribes and religions would not compete for opportunities as citizens or human beings created in the image of God because the victimhood mentality imprisons them in believing that they are being marginalised, discriminated against or excluded. Such mentality makes them accumulate hatred, anger, malice and aggression, which would escalate to violence and destruction of lives and properties on the slightest provocation. This means ethnic, tribal and religious conflict and violence sometimes occur based on a feeling of marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion that exists in people's imaginations.

Therefore, the prophetic preaching of reconciliation means to use the text of the Bible to proclaim hope and healing of the wounds created by ethnic, tribal and religious violence and conflict. That is, hearers must be energised with a hope-filled vision of the new reign of God that is to come (Tisdale 2006). In other words, the prophetic preaching of hope against a victimhood mentality means to help people acquire the ability to overcome the feeling of victimhood. Joseph's words and actions toward his brothers are what the study considers as helping people to overcome this victimhood mentality. We read in Genesis 50:19, 21: "Joseph said to them, don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? Don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. Joseph reassured them and spoke kindly to them." It was more or less like saying to his brothers, do not imprison yourself into thinking that, because your father is dead you are helpless and hopeless. Your life and security are in God's hand. Stated differently, Joseph's words and actions aim to give his brothers assurance of hope and a better future in the land of Egypt. This is what the prophetic preaching of reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria should target – giving people assurance that will enable them to move past the victimhood mentality.

What is more, the prophetic preaching of reconciliation should help people to acquire the ability to move past the assumption that they cannot achieve anything because they are being marginalised, discriminated against and excluded based on their tribal, ethnic and religious affiliation. In this regard, Bishop Kukah (2012) preached to the youths and people of Southern Kaduna that:

> The entire people of Southern Kaduna especially the Youth, rise up, fear is dead and it will never rise again. You were afraid, you were poor and felt defeated. Now, the world is yours to conquer. Rise up, get ready to light your candles because we have seen the light of a star in Kaduna. Go forward and meet up with other young men and women like yourselves. Free yourselves from religious prisons dream big and beautiful dreams. A wonderful, peaceful, just and non-discriminatory, the unselfish world lies ahead of you. Conquer fear, take the torch and march forward, whether you are Christopher or Mustapha march on, whether you are Mary or Maryamu march ahead.

In addition to prophetic preaching, biographical preaching is a preaching technique that may be used to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the situation of division, conflict and violence. Therefore, the next section will look closely at this.

6.5 BIOGRAPHICAL PREACHING OF RECONCILIATION

Preaching reconciliation requires the use of biographical sermons. Such sermons entail the projection of biblical character so that people may see what is required of them to be reconciled and live a harmonious life with one another. According to Blackwood (1941:52), "biographical preaching is the one which grows out of the facts concerning a Biblical character, as these facts throw light upon the problems of the people in the pews". The choice of the person on which to preach depends on what purpose the preacher has for the lesson. De Brand (1988:13) considers biographical preaching to be "[s]ermons that interpret the life or some aspect of the life of a biblical person for contemporary significance". This means biographical sermons interpret the biblical character's personality, strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, motivations and any other aspect of his or her life's significance for the listener.

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The point of departure for the study on biographical sermons however, is that the sermon is developed by studying the life of a Bible character, which then gives an opportunity for people to learn about the character, while at the same time recognising the practical ways the Bible characters dealt with problems and circumstances similar to those of the listeners (North 2010). In this regard, the focus of the study is the practical ways in which the biblical characters of Joseph and his brothers embodied reconciliation and how such may be helpful for preaching reconciliation meaningfully in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Therefore, the study considers the following as projections of embodying reconciliation in Joseph and his brothers.

6.5.1 FROM MENTALITY OF STRANGER, FOREIGNER AND OUTSIDER TO MENTALITY OF BELONGING

The concept of the *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* mentality is rooted in the African traditional concept of ethnicity. In other words, the root cause of the *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* mindset is the law of kinship that defines people based on ancestral blood group as those who are insiders and outsiders. That is, *outsiders*, *foreigners* and *strangers* do not belong and, on account of this, they are not entitled to equal treatment, ownership, affinity, loyalty and obligation, community rights and protection, and they are not a people, they are outside of the commonwealth, they are strangers (Turaki 2001:89) (see sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2). In the narrative of Joseph and brothers, Joseph's brothers' demonstrate a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality when they say: Come now, let's kill Joseph and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him (Genesis 37:20). They show a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality in the way they strip Joseph of his robe and the manner in which they throw him into the cistern (Genesis 37:23-24). The peak of the *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may be seen in how Joseph's brothers ignored the passionate plea of Joseph when they were selling him to the Ishmaelites (Genesis 42:21). The action of Joseph's brothers toward Joseph is what Cilliers (2008:7) calls treating a human being as *Into*, which is the opposite of *Ubuntu*, therefore to dehumanise a human into a thing. Their actions demonstrated that Joseph was considered a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* and less human who does not belong, and as such is not worth being treated like a human being.

In the same manner, ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region has and is creating in the mind of people a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* mentality. In other words, some people hold on to the traditional African mentally that ethnic boundaries are defined by the ancestry and blood. Humanity is defined in terms of the in-group or insiders and the out-group or outsiders and strangers. Their philosophical and ethical view of life and the world is particularistic and not universalistic. One belongs to an ancestral blood group or communal kinship; and to the ancestral land. An outsider or a non-blood group member can become a blood group member by assimilation or become one with the group, but his or her status remains that of a stranger or foreigner. People who still hold on to this ancient worldview find it very difficult to open up to others. The current serious problem of labelling some people strangers, foreigners and settlers on the basis of religious and ethnic differences in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is deeply rooted in this ancient worldview (Turaki 2012).

Therefore, there is a need to help the people of the Middle Belt region to be transformed from this marginalising, discriminating and excluding mentality. And one of the ways is the biographical preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. As we read through the story we see how Joseph and his brothers were transformed, that is, they were being changed from a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality to a *belonging* (humanising) mentality. They moved past the walls, frontiers and barriers of division to the treatment of someone as a fellow human being created in the image of God (see sections 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.2). To put it in the context of the Middle Belt region, they move past self-centeredness, religious parochialism and ethnic or tribal sentiments to the treatment of the other as a fellow human being created in the image of God, irrespective of ethnicity, tribe and religion. They move past the selfish inclination, the use of tribal, ethnic and religious differences to call others *strangers*, *foreigners* and *outsiders* (dehumanised) to a sense of valuing and dignifying human beings, regardless of who they are.

For example, Joseph's brothers demonstrated the mentality of *belonging* (humanising) when they showed solidarity with Benjamin their brother who was to be taken back to Egypt to become Joseph's slave because the silver cup was found in his sack. Instead of them abandoning Benjamin to his predicament and continuing with their journey, they voluntarily returned with Benjamin to Egypt. In other words, Joseph's brothers went to the Egyptian ruler with rent

garments and threw themselves to the ground before him. In this episode, Joseph's brothers demonstrate a mentality of *belonging* (humanising), which signifies the oneness of all humanity. Stated differently, Joseph's brothers' act signifies that a *belonging* mentality means a high sense of responsibility and obligation of human beings toward fellow human beings created in the image of God. As Tutu (Tutu & Tutu 2014:126) says, a mentality of *belonging* means humankind are all members of the same human family. All modern humans are related to what scientists call mitochondrial Eve, which refers to human beings' common matrilineal ancestor. This implies that all humankind is a cousin of one another, at most ten thousand times removed. The fact that all human beings belong to the same human family means human beings are created with an inherent ability to treat fellow human beings with respect and value. This is more or less the same with Cilliers's (2008:1) understanding of *Ubuntu*, namely that humanity or humanness stems from the belief that one is a human being through others. To a large extent, *Ubuntu* is similar to this study's concept belonging (humanising), which literally means "the other is a fellow human being like me; I will accommodate, accept, and give him or her the best treatment accorded for a human being".

As such, preaching reconciliation as the mentality of *belonging* (humanising) means using the story of Joseph and his brothers to show people how they may step out of self-centeredness, race, ethnic and tribal sentiments and religious parochialism and accord the other, whoever the other may be – Christian or non-Christian, different ethnic groups and tribes – treatment appropriate for a human being. Stated differently, preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region should focus inter alia on helping Christians to treat their fellow humankind of other religions as people created in the image and likeness of God. This means Christians need help to acquire the ability to see a fellow human being, irrespective of ethnicity and religion, as a representative of God here on earth. What is more, the preaching of reconciliation should help Christians to acquire the ability to use every opportunity – that is position, wealth, strength, knowledge – to value and dignify one another. Preaching reconciliation as a mentality of *belonging* (humanising) therefore is to help Christians to be committed to doing things that may make human beings feel they are treated with respect and dignity. In other words, when Christians move past the *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality to the mentality of dignifying fellow human beings, it makes people feel accepted, accommodated and treated as human beings, irrespective of ethnicity and religion. That is, it gives people a sense of belonging, a sense of being

considered as human beings. Joseph's brothers' action displayed that it did not matter to them whether Benjamin was the favoured son of Jacob or the son of Rachel; all that mattered was the well-being of their brother – a human being created in the image of God.

Reconciliation as moving past a *stranger*, *foreigner* and *outsider* (dehumanising) mentality to the mentality of *belonging* is also demonstrated in Judah's speech. So we read in Genesis 44:30-34:

> So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father: whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servant will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, if I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life! Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come to my father.

Judah's speech demonstrates that a mentality of *belonging* includes the willingness to sacrifice one's comfort and convenience for the well-being of a fellow human being created in the image of God. The speech shows a high sense of determination and commitment to do anything humanly possible to protect their father against anything that will cause him heartbreak and sorrow (Genesis 37:32). Saenz (2014:44) argues that "[s]uch explanations give the idea of a strong engagement of Judah in Benjamin's and Jacob's life, to the point that Judah was ready to exchange his life for Benjamin's and avoid Jacob's grief and death". This is the type of determination and commitment to the course of the other that the concept of *belonging* (humanising) portrays. That is, Judah's speech portrays the kind of preaching the Middle Belt region needs to help Christians move past self-centeredness, ethnic and tribal sentiments and religious parochialism to protect the other, whoever he or she may be, against anything that causes sorrow, pain, trauma and heartbreak. As a matter of fact, Judah's speech revealed Joseph's brothers' commitment to the well-being of their father and has nothing to do with their father's attitude. It does not matter whether their father was partial in his relationship to them or not; all that mattered was preventing that which would cause sorrow of bereavement in the life of

Jacob. This is what preaching reconciliation should emphasise – a commitment to treating people as human beings created in the image and likeness of God. But this cannot be possible if there is no sacrifice of stepping out of comfort zones and convenient enclaves to friendship. The next section will consider moving from estrangement to friendship.

6.5.2 MOVING FROM ESTRANGEMENT TO HOSPITALITY

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, there was estrangement when the brothers hated and could not speak a kind word to Joseph (Genesis 37:4, 8, 11). The peak of the estrangement in the family of Jacob was when the brothers sold Joseph out to the Midianite merchants (Genesis 37:26-28). That estrangement led to the feelings of guilt and insecurity in the lives of Joseph's brothers. So we read in Genesis 42:21: "They said to one another, surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us." And in Genesis 45:3 we are told that, when Joseph made himself known to his brothers, they were unable to answer him because they were terrified at his presence. Furthermore, after the death of Jacob, their father, Joseph's brothers sent word and afterward they went and pleaded with Joseph because they thought, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" (Genesis 50:15-18).

From these passages we are made to realise that estrangement creates insecurity and fear of the other. Estrangement also creates an atmosphere of suspicion of the other. That is, in most cases estrangement creates the false feeling that the perceived other is planning evil against us. One of the great effects of division, whether it is religious, ethnic or tribal, is that it creates estrangement. Division creates walls, frontiers and barriers between people who are divided. And behind that wall and barrier lie fear, insecurity and suspicion. One always has the feeling that the other, who is our enemy, may unexpectedly appear and harms us. This is the experience of some ethnic, tribal and religious groups in the Middle Belt region. A feeling of fear, insecurity, suspicion and mistrust is making people stock arms in the region. The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (2012:54) notes that "[t]here are allegations and counter-allegations of arms proliferation, arms stockpiling and arms trafficking, to the extent that people have been arrested for being in possession of arms, either during routine house-to-house searches, working on tip-offs or at checkpoints".

Therefore, there is a need to help people overcome the attitude and actions that portray a life of estrangement in the Middle Belt region. And one of the ways to do that is the biographical preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. That is preaching through the use of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers to show people of Middle Belt region what it means to move from estrangement to hospitality. This is because, in the Bible, we are enabled to see how Joseph and his brothers move from estrangement to showing hospitality. So we see Joseph took his brothers to his house and they feasted and drank freely with him (Genesis 43:17, 34). And in Genesis 45:22-23 we read, to each of them Joseph gave new clothing. And he sent to his father ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. Joseph in these episodes displays what the study consider as moving from estrangement to hospitality. That is Joseph demonstrated the willingness to give, to help, to assist, to love and to carry people's burden without necessarily profit or reward as the driving force (Gathogo 2007:108).

Hospitality as an ingredient for reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is graphically captured in Prophet Elisha treatment of the Arameans Soldiers who went to attack Israel. So we read in 2Kings 6:22-23, Elisha said to the King of Israel, do not kill them, set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master. So the King prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sends them away, and they returned to their master. So the band from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory. Like Joseph, Prophet Elisha is depicted focusing on hospitality. That is he demonstrated commitment to welcome the other who was an enemy with a mission of capturing him, by sharing kindness, love and material resources (Hagstrom 2013). Through the exercise of hospitality, Prophet Elisha was able to bring about peace and reconciliation in the war between Aram and Israel. Brueggemann (2000:352) argues that "because of great feast, Elisha is a peace-maker who turns hostility into provisional friendliness."

Joseph and Prophet Elijah actions captures the essence of the notion of hospitality that need to be preach in the situation of divisions, conflicts, and violence. That is helping people to acquire the ability to know that no individual, ethnic and religious group is an island in himself or herself, rather each and every one is part of the whole. This means human beings are created into a communal and interconnected relationship. In addition, people need to be encourage to recognize

that humanity belong to a bundle of life where they share what they have and that what happen to one happen to the whole group. As such one is diminished when others are excluded and marginalized or one is diminished, when others are dehumanized or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are (Tutu 1999:35; Gathogo 2007:117; Tshawane 2009:112-113).

In addition, Joseph and Prophet Elisha actions reveal that hospitality in an atmosphere of hostility, suspicion; mistrust and loss of friendship require the willingness to take a risk. That is as Oduyoye (2001:94) would say hospitality in the midst of hostility require the readiness to compromise and accommodate even what erodes dignity, weakens the present and mortgages the future. As such Christians in the situation of divisions, conflicts, and violence should not exercise hospitality solely because it is fundamental ingredient for reconciliation but also and, above all, because it is derived from faith in Jesus who for us is the way, the truth and the life (Oduyoye 2001:95). In other words, in a situation of divisions, conflict, and violence Christians need to depend on God for ability to not just to make provision of material goods, but also recognition of the humanness and dignity of the other whoever he or she may be (Hagstrom 2013).

As such the hospitality demonstrated by Joseph and Prophet Elisha is very relevant to preaching reconciliation. This is because the stories may inspire people in the situation of divisions, conflicts, and violence to have the courage to extend generosity, giving freely without expectation of benefit. In other words, the narrative of Joseph and his brother may help people to acquire the ability to demonstrate willingness to give, to help, to assist human beings created in the image of God that may turns hostility into friendliness. In the case of Middle Belt region the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may empower Christians to use avenues like public service, schools, market, games, recreational centers and any opportunity to turn hostility to an atmosphere of inter-ethnic and inter-religious friendship. That is engaging in activities that may dissuade inter-ethnic and inter-religious fear, mistrust, and insecurity caused by religious estrangement.

In addition, the story of Joseph attests to the fact that actions geared toward hospitality have the power to subdue human aggression, hostility, conflict, and violence. This denotes that actions geared toward generosity, giving freely without expectation of benefit facilitate reconciliation. This means inter-ethnic, inter-tribes and inter-religious harmony is stronger when people focused

on hospitality and that which promote human friendship and care for one another, rather than giving to fear and suspicion.

6.5.3 FROM CRUEL INDIFFERENCE TO COMPASSIONATE COMMITMENT

Sometimes people, perhaps because of being blinded by ethnic, tribal and religious sentiments and individual egocentrism, tend to be cruelly indifferent to how they treat and harm others (Lynes 2009:64). In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, cruel indifference can be seen in the manner the brothers planned to maltreat Joseph. So we read in Genesis 37:20: "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him." In addition, Joseph's brothers showed cruel indifference in the way they stripped Joseph of his robe and, worst of all, the manner they threw him into the cistern (Genesis 37:23-24). The peak of cruel indifference manifest in the manner the brothers ignored the passionate plea of Joseph when they were selling him (Genesis 42:21).

Therefore it is cruel indifference that leads to division, conflict and violence. It is cruel indifference that makes humankind fight, maim, destroy property and kill one another in the name of perceived differences. Without compassion, human beings assume a dangerous and cruel disposition. The rape, murder, slice off women's breasts, remove men's genitals, chop off the hands and feet of adults, children and sometimes infants, and slash pregnant women's stomachs with machetes in the name of ethnic or religious differences; all of this reveals how a lack of compassion has inhabited some people in the Middle Belt region (see section 2.4.5). One may perhaps argue that cruel indifference in the Middle Belt region is a confirmation of Tutu and Tutu's (2014:19) observation that:

> When we are uncaring, when we lack compassion, when we are unforgiving, we will always pay the price for it. We are made to exist in a delicate network of interdependence. We are brothers and sisters, whether we like or not. To treat anyone as if they were less than human, less than a brother or a sister, no matter what they have done, is to contravene the very laws of our humanity. And those who shared the web of interconnectedness cannot escape the consequences of their action.

Elaigwu (2005, cited in Ikelegbe 2013:490) identified 17 major violent conflicts in Nigeria from May 1985 to May 1999. The situation has grown worse since democratisation opened up political space in May 1999, because communal, ethnic and religious violence has increased. From 31 May 1999 to June 2005, Elaigwu identified at least 121 cases of conflict in Nigeria (Elaigwu, cited in Ikelegbe 2013:490). In addition, Joshua (2013:333) says: "It is on record that since 1999, there have been over 90 violent ethnoreligious conflicts in the country with over 100,000 lives lost." This means cruel indifference is pervasive in the Middle Belt region. In this region, cruel indifference may be seen in the amount of money that is spent on buying sophisticated weapons used during the ethnic and religious conflict and violence, while in the same society there are beggars all over, thousands of youths are jobless, and many people can hardly feed themselves. In addition, while people are busy using ethnic and religious differences to exclude, marginalise and discriminate, plaguing issues like hunger, poverty and unemployment are busy uniting people. In other words, issues like poverty and unemployment do not know ethnicity, tribe or religion, because they affect all human beings.

As such there is a need to help people to change from being cruelly indifferent to being compassionate in their relations with one another in the Middle Belt region. In other words, preaching reconciliation should aim at empowering people to show kindness and love, and to cherish, protect and come to the aid of humankind irrespective of religion, tribe or ethnicity. In addition, preaching reconciliation should help people acquire the ability to demonstrate delightful recognition of humankind as fellow human beings created in the image of God and to treat them as valuable and special, irrespective of ethnicity, tribe or religion. By so doing there will be harmonious relationships instead of fear and mistrust. And one of the means to do that is the biographical preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. That is, preaching about the use of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers to show people what it means to show compassion to fellow human beings created in the image of God. Therefore, the following are ways in which compassionate commitment may be preached.

6.6.3.1 COMPASSIONATE COMMITMENT AS IDENTIFICATION

Biographical preaching of compassionate commitment as identification means preaching through the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to help people acquire the ability to use their position, knowledge, wealth, influence and everything within their power to respond to human

need in a manner that people may feel human beings created in the image of God have identified with them. This is graphically portrayed in the manner in which Joseph used his position of power to provide food in the situation of hunger to the family of Jacob. So we see in Genesis 42:25: "Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grains, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey." In this episode, Joseph demonstrates what the study considers as compassionate commitment as identification. This is because the family of Jacob was in need of food in a situation of hunger and Joseph compassionately responded to that need, without collecting the money that was offered for the payment of the food. This means Joseph demonstrated empathy, the capacity to enter, understand and respond to another's frame of reference. Stated differently, Joseph displayed an act of trying to feel what the other person is feeling, to climb into his/her shoes and to look at the problem from his/her point of view (Thesnaar 2010:271; Louw 2016:11).

From the way Joseph demonstrated compassionate commitment as identification, it can be argued that compassionate commitment as identification is the direct opposite of cruel indifference. This is because cruel indifference is a lack of feeling, a lack of sympathy, a lack of concern or even doing that which causes pain and suffering. But compassionate commitment as identification is to show concern and sympathy, and to do that which may make someone feel that a fellow human being identifies with him or her in their situation. For example, a prominent Muslim writer once commented to Pope John Paul II on a visit to France that churches in Western Europe had become a sign of hope to Muslims. This is because Christians opened their church auditoriums for Muslims to take refuge in to prevent them from being expelled from the country. In addition, various church bodies granted scholarships, hostels and charitable deeds and activities to Muslims students (Duran 1986:25). This concurs with Mandela's (1994:448) argument that "all men, even the most seemingly cold-blooded, have a core of decency, and that if their hearts are touched, they are capable of changing". That is, all human beings, irrespective of religion or ethnicity, have been created with the ability to identify with fellow human beings in their situation of need. All human beings have been created with the ability to respond to acts of identifying with them. This means compassionate commitment as identification has the ability to defuse hatred, division, resentment, ethnic sentiment and religious parochialism. This is very important in preaching reconciliation in a situation of division, conflict and violence so that

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people may acquire the ability to focus their attention on compassionate commitment as identification by responding to life-threatening issues and human needs.

Therefore, biographical preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may help to equip people to focus their attention, energy, resources and all within their power on showing compassion through responding to human need.

6.6.3.2 COMPASSIONATE COMMITMENT AS ACTS OF KINDNESS

Besides showing acts of identification, the biographical preaching of compassionate commitment requires the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to help people acquire the ability to demonstrate acts of kindness. In other words, preaching compassionate commitment should help people acquire the ability to voluntarily engage in activities that may promote the well-being of the society. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are enabled to see how Joseph demonstrated acts of kindness. So we read in Genesis 45:22-23 that, to each one of them, Joseph gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. And this is what he sends to their father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. And in Genesis 47:11-12, we see that "Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children". These episodes offer a graphic picture of compassionate commitment as an act of kindness. In other words, Joseph shows kindness, and loves, cherishes and comes to the aid of his brothers. He demonstrates a delighted recognition of his brothers and treats them as valuable and special. In doing these things, Joseph creates an atmosphere in which his brothers will relate freely to him.

Compassionate commitment as acts of kindness may be further illustrated by the action of more than two hundred Christian youths from the medical profession. These Christians, who are exclusively from France, went to Afghanistan and spent more than a year serving in places that are medical desert and entirely Muslim areas. They risked their lives by sharing the suffering and hardship of the people. The Afghans were impressed by the sacrificial spirit of the young European Christians, whereby a delegation of the Afghan resistance thanked the bishops of the region where the young Christian came from for the support rendered to Muslims. An Afghan resistance poet commented that a new page had been opened in Christian-Muslims relations

(Duran 1986:24). This is relevant to preaching reconciliation in the situation of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. This is because preaching may motivate people to use their potential to compassionately engage in voluntary social work that may promote the well-being of the society in which they live, and its environs. For example, people may use their teaching potential to voluntarily organise classes for primary school pupils and secondary school students. People with knowledge of medicine may render voluntary medical services to rural areas where access to hospitals is difficult. People with knowledge of business may voluntarily provide orientation to business. Churches may mobilise their church members for community projects like cleaning the environment. In rural areas, churches may mobilise church members to work toward improving the conditions of bad roads in their areas, and the like.

Therefore, preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region should emphasise compassionate commitment as acts of kindness. In other words, preaching reconciliation should help people to voluntarily engage in acts that demonstrate kindness, love, protection and coming to the aid of fellow human beings created in the image of God.

6.5.4 FROM A SENSE OF OTHERNESS TO A SENSE OF SAMENESS

In most cases, exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination and all forms of polarisation produce a sense of otherness. This means otherness emerges when the bond that connects people is cut off. Otherness therefore occurs when individuals, or ethnic, racial or religious groups, take themselves out of the pattern of interdependence and place themselves in a position of sovereign independence. The "other" then emerges either as an enemy that must be pushed away from the "them or us" and driven out as a nonentity – a superfluous being – that can be disregarded and abandoned. In addition, otherness entails erasure of separation, not recognising "other" as someone who, in his or her otherness, belongs to the pattern of interdependence. What is more, "other" may emerges as an inferior being who must either be assimilated by being made like the "them or us", or be subjugated to the "them or us". The sense of otherness is prominent where the violence of expulsion, assimilation, subjugation and indifference of abandonment replace the dynamics of taking in and keeping out, as well as the mutuality of giving and receiving (Volf 1996:67).

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, a sense of otherness and isolation may be seen in the manner in which the brothers refused to talk to Joseph. So we read in Genesis 37:4 that "[t]hey hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (see section 4.3.3, 4.4.4). The otherness and isolation degenerated into taking action equal to killing and, invariably, to separation. This means division, conflict and violence sometimes begin with a sense of otherness, which is the disruption of an interdependent relationship. That is, sometimes individual, ethnic, tribal and religious fighting, destruction of property and killing of human beings begins with disruption of relationship among the people.

One of the things that creates a sense of otherness that results in division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region is the issue of land ownership and boundaries (see section 2.4.2). As the population of people in the Middle Belt region kept increasing, some ethnic groups became multi-ethnic groups, tribes became multi-tribes, clans became multi-clans, extended families became clans, and nuclear families became extended families, and the contest and escalation of conflict over land for farming kept increasing. Several communities that hitherto lived peacefully suddenly took arms against one another as a result of a claim of ownership of the land and, by implication, the community. Ethnic groups and tribes kept on fighting and killing one another. Best (2006) holds the conviction that, in the Middle Belt region, the pressure on land from all directions heightens the proliferation of ethnic and communal conflicts, including the political ones, with most of them arising from the land question. For instance, Alimba (2014:187-188) and Omotoso (n.d.) observed that, in Nasarawa State, the Alago, Hausa and Tiv clashed over land and chieftaincy from 1995 to 2005, and the Egburra and Bassa in Toto clashed over land, chieftaincy and politics. In 1989, 1990 and 1997, intra-communal conflict occurred in Ipav in Gboko of Benue State based on the land problem. In Taraba State, the chieftaincy tussle between the Chamba/Jukun and Kuteb has been ongoing since it started in 1996; in 2004 in Adamawa State there was fighting between the Bachama and Hausa/Fulani over land ownership, politics and religion. In June 2003, the Ekepedo and Ogori clashed over land ownership in Kogi/Edo States.

Therefore, as Mandela (1994:17) says, violence could never be the ultimate solution, and men and women by their very nature require some kind of negotiated understanding. This means there is a need to help people, ethnic, tribal and religious group to overcome any individual, ethnic,

tribal and religious sense of otherness. And one of the means of doing that is the biographical preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. That is, preaching by using the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers would show the people of the Middle Belt region what it means to overcome otherness and create an atmosphere of sameness among diverse ethnic, tribal and religious groups. In Genesis 45:15 we read: "Afterward his brothers talked with him." This means Joseph and his brothers interacted freely after many years of hatred, conflict, violence and separation as brothers, sons of Jacob and, above all, as human beings created in the image of God. What Joseph and his brothers did is what the study considers as a face-to-face relationship. That is, a relationship rooted in a profound respect for people as truly human beings created in the image of God, rather than as an instrumental objects or a self-projection (McClure 1995:21).

Therefore, preaching reconciliation as a sense of sameness means the use of biographical preaching on the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to help people acquire the ability to create a relationship rooted in deep respect for human beings among diverse people, diverse ethnic groups and religions. In other words, the idea of sameness means the use of preaching to stimulate people to use their wealth, positions, knowledge and anything within their power to promote relationships rooted in a high regard for human beings created in the image of God (McClure 1995:15). The sense of sameness that the study advocates is also explained by Cilliers's (2007b:15) understanding of the Greek word for space:

> The Greek word *Chora* means space or place and could also be interpreted as the *attitude* through which humans fill space with values, perceptions, and associations, resulting in a created relational environment, a systemic and hermeneutical arena for living with meaning and dignity. *Chora* represents a nourishing and maternal receptacle, a womb that defines the quality of the places (*topoi*) where we encounter one another. Indeed, in this space we cannot exist without one another; it is where we meet in our diversity and unity, but also as perpetrators and victims.

The above explanation of space is what preaching reconciliation as a sense of sameness in Middle Belt region should seek to do. That is, creating an atmosphere in which people may

engage and strive to come to terms with one another. The idea of preaching reconciliation as a sense of sameness creates the picture of people from diverse ethnic groups, tribes and religions relating, interacting and discussing freely as human beings created in the image of God. One can imagine how Joseph and his brothers sat together and held a discussion that resulted in the healing of their broken relationship. This means a relationship on the basis of sameness helps people to be healed from individual, ethnic, tribal and religious seclusion, isolation and separation. Relationships on the basis of sameness clear the air of suspicion and false speculation and build trust in an atmosphere of division, conflict and violence.

In addition, the use of preaching to motivate people to relate to one another on the basis of sameness may defuse the frequently occurring tribal, ethnic and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region, because the church has structures that penetrates every nook and cranny of the region. This means preaching may be used to create an atmosphere of interaction and relationships rooted in profound respect for human beings among tribes, ethnic and religious groups in a small and effective ways. For example, people may be encourage to use avenues like markets, games (especially football), public work, schools, social clubs and recreational centres to engage in inter-ethnic and inter-religious interactions.

Preaching reconciliation as an idea of sameness may be well illustrated by a programme called REACH run by some churches in Rwanda after the Rwandan genocide. The programme is similar to preaching reconciliation as sameness, because the perpetrators and survivors of the genocide were brought together in a neutral and safe place to meet. An atmosphere was created in which they would be open to each other and talk about their conflicts, the root causes of the conflicts that led to the Rwandans 1994 genocide and, finally, discuss a way forward for healing and reconciliation as a nation. That is, both the perpetrators and victims discussed and analysed how to heal their wounds and become a healthy nation (Kalisa 2015:1).

From the foregoing, it can be argued that biographical preaching is a preaching technique that may be used to show listeners what it means to reconcile. However, pastoral preaching can also be used as a technique for preaching reconciliation and that will be considered closely in the next section.

6.6 PASTORAL PREACHING OF RECONCILIATION

Besides the use of biographical sermons as a strategy for preaching reconciliation, pastoral preaching is another means of preaching reconciliation. There are diverse definitions of pastoral preaching, but the following are considered relevant to the purpose of this study. Gunnink (1989:69) defines pastoral preaching as an "attempt to meet individual and personal needs of the people by means of a sermon. It is an attempt to take the needs of people in one hand and the truth of the gospel in the other and bring the two together by means of the spoken word". Harry Emerson Fosdick (cited in Aden & Hughes 2002:30) upholds that every sermon should have as its main business the head-on constructive meeting of some problem that is puzzling minds, burdening consciences and distracting lives, no sermon which so met a real human difficulty, with light to throw on it and help to win victory over it, could possibly be futile. For Fosdick, the test of whether the sermon is pastoral or not is determined by how many wish to see the preacher for personal counselling (Aden & Hughes 2002:30). Nichols (1987:18) defines pastoral preaching as "[t]he homiletical occasion when, whether by its dimension, its strategy, or its subject, a sermon addresses or impacts the personally invested concern of its hearers". That is preaching is pastoral in that there is a pastoral impact to what is said and it deliberately set out to touch and involve people's personal concern whether on an immediate or a more global level. Preaching is pastoral when the very subject of a sermon is an issue of pastoral import, whether to an individual or a community scale. For example, preaching is pastoral when the sermon focuses on family breakup, conflict in the congregation or disaster in the community (Nichols 1987:15-17). Stackel (1968:369) asserts that "[p]astoral preaching grows out of a man of God becoming immersed healingly in the lives of the members of his congregation". The preacher lives among the congregation and with them. He or she becomes saturated with their situations. As such, the preacher speaks to them from inside their situations, rather than from outside them. He or she has shared their problems with them. He or she is one of them (Stackel 1968).

Therefore, this study considers pastoral preaching as a means of providing guidance for a community of Christians with the purpose of meeting a need through the sermon. That is, pastoral preaching is helping people to discover God's grace and purpose in the situation they find themselves. Some might need to be guided by the word of grace in order to receive God's comfort. Others might need to be admonished to respond to the word of grace with lives that

reflect that grace. The critical function of the pastoral preacher is to determine the emphasis that will speak to the situation of the listener (Nichols 1987:26; Allen 1988:177-178). As such, the focus of this study is the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to guide people in the Middle Belt region to discover what it means to be reconciled. In other words, it is preaching that guides listeners to discover how to live a harmonious life through the use of the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. This is important because division, conflict and violence create pain, trauma, wounds and heart-breaking experiences. Furthermore, issues like accepting responsibility and confession of the evil done in the past, forgiveness and coming together, living together, walking together and prospering together after many years of division, conflict and violence are humanly tough to do. Lent (2003:18) maintains that the energy required to accept fault and take responsibility in broken relationships is great. Time is needed for the intensity of the early emotions to subside and the initial pride to heal, and to allow for the rationale to exercise more influence. Time is needed to find constructive and genuine ways to express the feelings that have been generated by the alienation. Relationships can sustain heavy damage in a short time. Relationships do not repair as rapidly as they break down (Lent 2003:18). But through the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, people may be guided to discover the processes of reconciliation. That is, the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers may be used to invite people to search for the processes of living a harmonious life with one another (Nichols 1987:26).

This study considers the following as avenues which pastoral preaching may use to help guide the listener to discover processes of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

6.6.1 FROM MALEVOLENT INTENT TO REMORSE AND REPENTANCE

Malevolent intent can be seen in how the brothers treated Joseph. So we see in Genesis 37:23-24: "When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe – the ornate robe he was wearing and they took him and threw him into the cistern." And we read in Genesis 37:28: "So when the Midianites merchant came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt." In this episode, the attitude and actions of Joseph' brothers depict malevolent intent, that is heart-breaking actions taken against Joseph by his brothers (see sections 4.4.4.1 and 4.4.4.2). This means that, in a

situation of division, conflict and violence, people will that another person is harmed and they intentionally inflict harm on these others. That is, people derive joy and pleasure from inflicting harm and causing others to suffer (Lynes 2009:64-65). This had been the experience of many ethnic groups, tribes and religions in the Middle Belt region.

The malevolent intent in the Middle Belt region manifests in how machetes, swords and guns of varying sophistication are constantly employed indiscriminately on fellow human beings in the name of ethnic, tribal and religious enemies. Some of the notable religious conflicts in the post-independence era include Jalingo (1992, 2009); Kafanchan (1987); Tafawa Balewa (1991, 1995, 2001); Zangon-Kataf (1992); Tiv-Jukun and Tiv-Kuteb (1992 to 93); Kuteb-Chamba (1997 to 1998); Igbirra-Bassa (1986 to 2000); Kaduna (Maitatsine riots in Rigassa 1982, 1992, 2000); Tiv and others in Nassarawa (2001); Jos (1994, 2000, 2001 to 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010); Ikulu-Bajju (2001); Yelwa-Shandam (2002, 2004); Mangu-Bokkos (1992 to 1995); Bukuru-Gyero (1997); Iggah-Oyikwa (2002); Numan (2004); Azare (2001); Bauchi (2010); and Wukari (2010) (Nuzhat 2014:16). In some of these conflicts and violence, people were either blown up by bullets or simply were hacked down or had their throats slit in the manner of slaughtering an animal. Sometimes people were sprayed with petrol and set ablaze. The stench of burnt bodies in some places was suffocating. The places of worship, houses, shops, markets, schools and vehicles belonging to perceived enemies were not spared (Adebayo 2010:216) (see 2.4.5.1, 2.5).

Therefore, people in the Middle Belt region need to be guided to discover what it means to have remorse and repent for attitudes and action that cause pain and sorrow to others. One of the means of doing this is through the pastoral preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. For, in the narrative of Joseph and his brother, we are enabled to see characters accepting the responsibility for the harm and pain they caused their brother. We read in Genesis 42:21: "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that is why this distress has come on us." Joseph's brothers in this episode show remorse for the evil they did in the past. They confessed the truth about their behaviour and attitude that caused harm, suffering and even the perceived death of their brother. What Joseph's brothers did is well captured by Christo Thesnaar's (cited in Lapsley & Karakashian 2012:160) poignant expression of shame and guilt for apartheid in South Africa:

> As I listened intently to the painful stories of my black fellow South African in Healing Memories Workshops, I began to realize that I could not hide behind excuses. The truth is that I benefited immensely from the apartheid system in many ways, including my education, health care, housing and freedom to travel. I began to accept that this made me as responsible for what was done under apartheid as those who are guilty of gross human rights violations. I had to learn to communicate my guilt and shame to others and not try and deal with them in isolation. I express my feeling of complicity in what happened under apartheid, acknowledge them and communicate openly my apologies and remorse to my fellow South Africans who were harmed. I realized that this is a continuous process of confessing, acknowledging, expressing real remorse and saying, 'I'm sorry'.

What Thesnaar did is in line with Volf's (2015:179) understanding that to accept responsibility means to say sorry for the wrong that has been done – to say sorry not so much for the guilt and shame, as for the suffering the wrong has caused. And to saying sorry in order to pull down the veil of silence behind which wrongdoing is hidden and to bring the moral stain of misdeed into the light of truth. Cilliers (2007b:14) adds that accepting responsibility means a deep confession coupled with the sincere desire to act and to transform that which was and still is wrong in society. This means pastoral preaching should help people to acquire the ability to make deep confession for the suffering and pain that their participation in division, conflict and violence had caused. Stated differently, preaching through the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers should empower people to accept their contribution to the division, conflict and violence and to be transformed.

The illustration below underscores this study's understanding of how pastoral preaching may guide people to accept responsibility for their actions in the situation of division, conflict and violence. During the post-Rwandan genocide, the Pentecostal Movement (ADEPR) carried out activities such as evangelism in order to create a safer space for the acceptance of prisoners' responsibilities for genocide crime. The evangelism enabled repentance and confession and also facilitated prisoners to seek forgiveness. The ADEPR also established literacy training programmes for illiterate prisoners. The ADEPR, in addition, organised some visitations between

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the prisoners and survivors and their families to create a good atmosphere of Christian-based relationships among them. The ADEPR also organised visits between prisoners and ex-prisoners in order to create an open space encouraging prisoners to give their testimonies concerning the role they played during the genocide (Sundqvist 2011:172).

This means pastoral preaching of reconciliation may be used to guide people to accept the perpetrating of loss of life or property or inflicting wounds on fellow human beings. People may also be helped to acquire the ability to confess the evil they did in the past to their victims if they can be reached.

6.6.2 FROM HOSTILITY TO RADICAL LOVE

Another important function of the pastoral preaching of reconciliation is to guide people to move from hostility to the discovery of radical love. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, Joseph's brothers displayed hostility in the manner they stripped Joseph of his robe and threw him into the cistern (Genesis 37:23-24). The brothers demonstrated hostility when they pulled Joseph out of the cistern and sold him like a commodity for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelite (Genesis 37:28). What is more, Joseph also displayed an attitude of hostility when he talked to his brothers harshly and put them in prison for three days after their first encounter in Egypt (Genesis 42:7-17).

In Nigeria, ethnic and religious hostility is unrelenting. Alubo (2011:1-2) poignantly asserts that, since the return to civil rule in May 1999, contestations and the attendant violence are unrelenting, and the media in Nigeria have fed their readership with screaming headlines on exploding bouts of civil disturbances such as "Sharia tears North Apart" (Tell March 6, 2000); "Sharia riot in Aba claim 50" (Vanguard March 1, 2000); "Bloodbath in Kano and Taraba" (Newswatch October 29, 2001); "Benue Massacre" (Tell November 5, 2001); "FCE Zaria: How Campus Politics turned Bloody" (Weekly Trust October 4-10, 2002:33); "13 Killed in Fresh Jos Violence" (Thisday January 2, 2002); "Miss World Riots: Shame of a nation" (Newswatch December 9, 2002); "Death Toll in Adamawa Clash Rises to 110" (Vanguard March 6, 2003); "Warri: 7 Die in Fresh Violence" (Thisday January 26, 2004:1); "Curfew imposed on Kano" (New Nigeria, May 12, 2004:1). Furthermore, from January to May 2014, the newspapers in Nigeria recorded 13 major cases of ethnic and religious violence, with an estimated 400 deaths,

thousands of people displaced and properties worth millions of naira lost in the Middle Belt region (Punch 2 and 7 January, 12 and 16 March, 2014; Tribune 7 January, 1 and 22 February, 2014; Thisday 5 and 7 February, 2014; Vanguard 22 February and 23 April, 2014; and African Examiner Nigeria 12 May, 2014). Recently, 40 people were killed and not less than 100 were injured, while about 2 000 were displaced. In addition, houses and huts, farmland and food barns, economic trees, farmland and several valuables were also not spared in an attack by herdsmen in Agatu Benue state (see sections 2.4.5.1, 2.5).

Therefore, it can be argued that pastoral preaching of reconciliation in the Middle Belt region is a necessity. This is because people need to be guided to know what it means to show radical love in a situation of division, conflict and violence. In other words, people need to be guided to move past the attitude of hostility to radical love. The following are ways in which pastoral preaching of reconciliation may guide people to know what it means to show radical love.

6.7.2.1 RADICAL LOVE AS LOVE FOR THE ENEMY

Radical love as love for the enemy means treating people who are hostile to one with love. The Bible aptly says: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). And, in Romans 12:20, we are told that if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink. This is graphically portrayed in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. So we read in Genesis 42:25: "Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and gave them provisions for their journey." And in Genesis 43:24 and 34, we are told that the steward took the brothers into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. So Joseph's brothers feasted and drank freely with them. In these episodes, Joseph demonstrated radical love as love for the enemy. This is because the manner in which his brothers treated him, as has been argued above, depicts them as his enemies. So Joseph shows radical love because he did not return evil for evil; rather, he repays evil with good (Romans 12:17). In this regard, Küng (1974:259) argues that it is not the fellow national or the co-religionist who counts, but any human being: even a political or religious opponent, rival, antagonist, adversary, enemy. Radical love is an openness, not only to members of one's own social group, one's own stock, one's own nation, race, class, party, church, to the exclusion of others, but unlimited openness and the overcoming of demarcation lines wherever they are drawn (Küng 1974:259). This means pastoral preaching of reconciliation

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as radical love requires the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to help people acquire the ability to desist from returning evil for evil, by living in peace, sharing goods, and doing deeds of charity as opportunities arise (Kajom 2012:224). The illustration below adds more understanding to the study's meaning of radical love as love for the enemy.

Amy Biehl was a girl from California, USA. Her passion for justice took her to South Africa, where she worked on voter education and registration in advance of the country non-racial election. The day before she was to board a plane for California, Amy drove some friends to Gugulethu, a black township outside Cape Town. Neither Amy nor her friends knew about the protest march that was taking place that day. A hail of rocks and stones halted Amy's car. She was dragged from the car, beaten and stabbed. She later died in a police station a continent away from her country of origin. Four men were convicted of her murder and sent to jail in South Africa. Amy's killers, however, applied for amnesty before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and her parents travelled to South Africa to support the amnesty application. In addition, Amy's parent established a foundation in her honour in the South African township where she was killed. Two of Amy's killers were employed and worked with her mother (Tutu & Tutu 2010:154-156).

6.7.2.2 RADICAL LOVE AS THE WILL OF SELF-SACRIFICE

Radical love as the will of self-sacrifice means loves that makes people sacrifice their life to the point of being willing to suffer for the sake of the other, whoever he or she may be. Stated differently, radical love as the will of self-sacrifice means being willing, determined and committed to the point of suffering for the sake of the well-being of another human being created in the image of God. This can be seen in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers when the silver cup was found in Benjamin sack. So we see in Genesis 44:13: "At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city." And in Genesis 44:33 we read: "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my Lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers." In all of these episodes, Joseph's brothers displayed radical love as the will of self-sacrifice by being willing, determined and committed to suffer for and with Benjamin. Judah was even willing and committed to exchange his freedom for Benjamin's slavery with all the humiliations and suffering attached to it.

Radical love as the will of self-sacrifice is the direct opposite of selfishness, ethnic sentiment, and religious parochialism. Küng (1974:257) says that radical love as the will of self-sacrifice means radical conversion, because human beings are egoists by nature. This means radical love as the will of self-sacrifice requires making an intentional effort to give the other, whoever he or she might be, exactly what we think is due to ourselves; to treat fellow human beings as we wish to be treated by them. In addition, radical love as the will of self-sacrifice also calls for readiness to help fellow human beings without reserve, and living not for ourselves, our tribe, ethnic group and religion, but for every human being created in the image of God. Radical love as the will of self-sacrifice may be illustrated by Mr William attitude toward Fulani herdsmen that ruined his rice paddies.

When 20 hectares (49 acres) of Mr. Rotimi William rice paddies were ruined in February 2016 by Fulani cattle he admits he was furious. Some of his laborers were ready to take up arms. But he decided on a different approach. Instead of lashing out, he hired the Fulani herdsmen who caused the damage to provide security. He then employed dozens of women from the nearby Fulani village to work in the fields (Martin 2016). [55]

As such, the pastoral preaching of reconciliation demands the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to help people understand what it means to move from hostility to radical love. This is because commitment to radical love as the will of self-sacrifice might defuse deep-rooted suspicion, reshape the imagination of mistrust, nullify desire for revenge, and soften wicked intention. Moreover, it was the radical love as the will of self-sacrifice demonstrated by Joseph's brothers that convinced Joseph of their transformation and invariably created the atmosphere for

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[55] Mr. Williams decided to become a farmer when his work as a journalist for Euromoney magazine in London opened his eyes to Nigeria's potential in Agriculture. He concluded that if agriculture could play a dominant role in the economies of such African countries as Kenya, Ghana, and Zambia, it could thrive as well in Nigeria. His farm, "Kereksuk Rice farm" which is situated in Tunga, Nasarawa state in northern Nigeria, currently sits on 45, 000 hectares and is the second largest rice farm in Nigeria. The farm produces 8,000 metric tons of rice a year. The farm also has more than 600 natives of Nasarawa as employees. In addition, the Kereksuk farm also has social responsibility initiative; they include training secondary school students in the production and economics of rice farming and contributing towards their training in higher institutions of learning; the second phase of this initiative involves training local Fulani women in the art of rice production (Source: Ikenna Nwachukwu, Agriculture, Business 30th June 2016).

reconciliation. In the same manner, it is an expression of radical love that may bring about trust in the situation of division, conflict and violence and promote reconciliation.

6.7.2.3 RADICAL LOVE AS RESOLUTE PROTECTION AGAINST HARM

Radical love as resolute protection against harm means a commitment to protect human beings against that which may cause pain, sorrow, anguish and loss of life. Humankind has the responsibility to avoid that which cause harm and do that which protects fellow human beings from harm. This can be seen in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, where the brothers avoided that which may cause harm and did that which might protect their father Jacob against what might cause him sorrow and bereavement. So we read in Genesis 44:30-31: "If my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die." And in Genesis 44:34 Judah said: "How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father." In these episodes, Joseph's brothers display a resolute commitment and determination to avoid that which may cause harm and do that which protects their father against any harm. Judah's speech depicts how human beings are supposed to be passionate in their commitment to avoid doing that which protects fellow human beings from pain, sorrow and harm. This means human beings are to have a passion for protecting their fellow human beings against harm rather than being passionate about their ethnic and religious affiliation.

Radical love is very cardinal to preaching reconciliation in the situation of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence because, as Volf (2011) says, almost all human beings love – Christians love, Muslims love, and followers of African traditional religion love. Volf argues further on the concept love from the point of view of Islam that the authoritative *hadith* collections (collections of the sayings of Muhammad and his companions) have a strong emphasis on love. For example, none of you has faith until you love for your brother what you love for yourself. None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself. The Qur'an also calls on the faithful to spend their substance out of love for orphans, needy, the wayfarer, for those who ask them, and for the ransom of slaves. This means that, for Muslims, love is not a mere sentiment but a sincere wish of the heart demonstrated by sacrificial actions (Volf 2011:158-159). Therefore, it can be argued that radical love has strong connections among human beings created in the image of God. That is, every human being, irrespective of

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ethnicity or religion, is created with the ability to give and receive love. Radical love has an inter-ethnic and inter-religious connection that may create an atmosphere of reconciliation and promote social cohesion in the situation of division, conflict and violence.

6.6.3 FROM VENGEANCE TO RADICAL FORGIVENESS

Another key role of the pastoral preaching of reconciliation is to guide people from the desire for revenge and vengeance to the discovery of forgiveness. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are shown how vengeance is the greatest temptation people face in a situation of division, conflict and violence. So we read in Genesis 42:7: "As soon as Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them." And in Genesis 42:9, Joseph falsely accuses his brothers of being spies, saying they have come to see where the land is unprotected. In addition, Joseph put his brothers in prison for three days without reason (Genesis 42:17). These attitudes of Joseph portray a desire for revenge or vengeance, which always characterises an atmosphere of conflict and violence (see section 5.2.1.1). As Keller (2005:1) says, when someone wrongs you, there is an unavoidable sense that the wrongdoer owes you. There is a compulsion to make the other person pay that debt. We do that by hurting them, yelling at them, making them feel bad in some way, or just waiting and watching and hoping that something bad happens to them.

Desmond Tutu of South Africa (Tutu & Tutu 2014:3) has a popular saying that there is no future without forgiveness, and that human rage and the human quest for revenge brings about destruction, and this is a reality in northern Nigeria. Studies on the impact of ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence, exacerbated by the activities of Boko Haram in the region, reveal that the Northern Nigerian economy, which used to be a thriving economy, has been ground to a halt. For example, road transport by some commercial buses used to fetch in the range of N40 000 to N45 000 a week for two trips, while the Nigerian airline industry was estimated to be making about N3 billion every day, but now analysts say that half of this amount is lost daily because passenger traffic to the north has reduced drastically. Furthermore, some tourism centres, which ranked first in Nigeria and generated approximately N80 billion annually, have come to a standstill by conflict and violence. The famous Argungu fishing festival, the Yankari Game Reserves, the Mambila Plateau, the tomb of Othman Dan-Fodio, Plateau state tourism centres, and others that attracted tourists from within and outside the country, have been

paralysed. In addition, conflict and violence have devastated the infrastructural subsector of the northern economy. This is because a good number of foreign and local contractors across the various northern states who had been engaged in the construction of roads, bridges, housing estates, dams, national integrated power projects and railway track rehabilitation, have either abandoned the sites or relocated to other states. This had caused a real setback to the economy of the region and pushes unemployment higher, as thousands of youth who would have been engaged by them now remain idle (Chukwurah et al. 2015:376).[56] This means that, in a situation of division, conflict and violence there is no winner; all are losers because the damage is collective.

As such there is a need to help people to move from the desire and practice of vengeance to radical forgiveness. That is, people in the Middle Belt region need the ability to stop counting the wrongful deeds of the past. People may name the wrongdoing committed and condemn it, but they should give the wrongdoers the gift of not counting their wrongdoing against them (Volf 2015:178). In other words, people need to be empowered through preaching to voluntarily give up the right to seek repayment from those who harmed them; to voluntarily refuse to hurt those who hurt them; to voluntarily refuse vengeance, payback, or the infliction of pain on those inflicted pain on them (Keller 2005:2). This means that, when people forgive, there is liberation because forgiveness breaks the chain that links both the victims and perpetrator to the past of wrongdoing.[57]

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[56] The commercial subsector that covers small and medium-scale enterprises, local markets, roadside shops and stores within the affected states have been closed down. This represents a huge capital flight from the northern economy in both human and financial terms. Kano, for example, serves as a commercial nerve centre not only for the north but also for neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Western Sudan. It is estimated that about $15 billion flowed through Kano's market each year, and hundreds of thousands of traders used to arrive daily from Nigeria and neighbouring countries, selling goods from factories in the south or imported from Asia. Kano's market had the oldest and biggest multi-billion naira textile market known in sub-Saharan African – the Kanti Kwari market, which is now stifled. Agricultural output is dwindling because farmers in most of states no longer farm for fear of what will happen to them (Chukwurah et al 2015:376).

[57] A graphic example of how preaching may promote forgiveness and hence reconciliation is illustrated in Sundqvist's study on the role of the Pentecostal Movement (ADEPR) as an actor in the reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda. The church placed *strong emphasis on forgiveness.* In other words, the church in Rwanda encouraged the practice of forgiveness, which is a two-way strategy whereby both perpetrators and victims are involved in the process of forgiveness (Sundqvist 2011:167). Sundqvist further argues that the church created a space called *Refugee Churches and Meetings for Perpetrators*. This provided an opportunity for perpetrators to heal the wounds they inflicted on themselves as they harmed others. The church assumed that healing can enable perpetrators to face their crimes, to engage with their victims, and to enter into a process that leads to reconciliation (Sundqvist 2011:173). There was also *Reconciliation through Education*, where education was used to sensitise the

One of the ways to do that is pastoral preaching on the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. This is because, in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are shown some graphic benefits of forgiveness in a situation of division, strife and violence. Therefore, the following are some of the ways pastoral preaching may use the narrative of Joseph and his brothers to stimulate the practice of forgiveness.

6.6.3.1 RADICAL FORGIVENESS AS A GUARD AGAINST POISONING FUTURE

This study considers forgiveness as an act of preventing the past from poisoning the future. Volf (2015:175) says forgiveness frees the past, marked by wrongdoing, from poisoning the present and spoiling the future. This means that, in a situation of division, conflict and violence, people are clouded with bitterness, hatred, anger, resentment and desire for revenge that threatens social cohesion and a progressive future. One of the ways in which the poison created by the wrongdoing of the past may be dealt with is by forgiveness. Stated different, in a warring situation, the foundation for a harmonious relationship and a bright future is forgiveness. This is depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's actions portray forgiveness as an act of preventing the past wrongdoing of his brothers from poisoning the coming together, staying together and prospering together of the family of Jacob after many years of strife and separation. So we are enabled to see radical forgiveness when Joseph gave orders to fill his brothers' bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey (Genesis 42:25). In addition, Joseph displayed radical forgiveness when he revealed himself to his brothers and said to them, "[d]o not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God send me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by great deliverance" (Genesis 45:5-7). Furthermore, we are told that Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and afterward his brothers talked with him (Genesis 45:15). Joseph, by his words and actions, depicts radical forgiveness. That is forgiveness without demanding for the confession of the evil done in the past. This act by Joseph prevented the actions of his brothers toward him from poisoning the coming together of Jacob's family and the fulfilment of God's plan for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob becoming a great nation.

Rwandese society, to promote a good understanding of the past, to build the skills of living with diversity, and to promote healing and reconciliation (Sundqvist 2011:174).

Forgiveness as preventing the past from poisoning the present and the future can be illustrated by the words and actions of Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Mandela testified that "I would not mince words about the horrors of apartheid, but I said, over and over, that we should forget the past and concentrate on building a better future for all". Furthermore, Mandela states that "I want South African to see that I loved even my enemies while I hated the system that turned us against one another" (Mandela cited in Wüstenberg 2009:43). Mandela's acts of forgiveness as preventing the past from poisoning the present and the future is aptly reflected in Tutu and Tutu's (2014:7) words that South Africa chose to seek forgiveness rather than revenge. This choice averted a bloodbath, because revenge is always costly and forgiveness rather than retaliation makes people stronger, and peace comes to those who choose to forgive.

For example, Mandela portrayed radical forgiveness as an act of preventing the wrongdoing of apartheid from poisoning the future of South African while he was in prison. Mandela made a decision to use negotiations as a means of preventing South Africa from plunging into war while he was still in prison. He said:

> I resolved to do something I had been pondering for a long while: begin discussions with the government. I had concluded that the time had come when struggle could best be pushed forward through negotiations. If we did not start a dialogue soon, both sides would soon be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence and war (Mandela 1994:513).

Elsewhere he stated that "I wrote to propose talks about talks. As before, I received no response. I wrote once more and again there was no response. I found this peculiar and demoralizing and I realized I had to look for another opportunity to be heard" (Mandela 1994:516). This means Mandela took the initiative to start negotiations between the South African Government and the ANC at that time. And, since his focus was to secure a good future for South Africa, he persisted.

In addition, Mandela exhibited radical forgiveness and even preached it when a respectable member of the ANC and a popular black South African, Chris Hani, was assassinated.[58] In this

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[58] Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to

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regard, Tutu and Tutu (2010:64-65) say that, "[i]n a moment of utmost volatility, Mandela chose to use his authority to damp the flames of bloody fury. He chose the long-term good of the country above the immediate satisfaction of demanding revenge". This means the focus of Mandela was to do that which may prevent the country from plunging into violence and war. When he became President he inaugurated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to guide the country through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this regard, Tutu and Tutu (2014:2) note that South Africa chose forgiveness because telling the truth and healing history was the only way to save the country from destruction. This process was embarked upon through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This study considers Mandela's words and actions of forgiveness as a prototype of the biblical Joseph. This is a conviction shared by Rabbi Toba Spintzer (2013), who argues that "[o]ne of Nelson Mandela's greatest gifts to the world is that he showed us – just as Joseph showed his brothers – the possibility of reconciliation in the wake of unspeakable brutality and oppression". Like Joseph, Nelson Mandela had a choice to be bitter and do upon the white people of South Africa as had been done to him and his people, and once given the chance, he could have sought vengeance. But he used the opportunity that had been presented to him and his country to become a model of forgiveness (Brackman 2013).[59]

6.6.3.2 RADICAL FORGIVENESS AS A HEALING BALM FOR WOUND CREATED BY CONFLICT

Divisions, conflict and violence create wounds that sometimes last for years. It is the wound that causes hatred, resentment, and desire for revenge. The danger is that sometimes people behave as if everything is normal, but deep within them there are wounds. In the Middle Belt region, some

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justice the assassin. The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the country and the world… Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of us (Tutu 2010:63-64).

[59] The day Mandela was released from prison there was great anxiety about what his reaction may be. Many people, especially white people, thought that Mandela would set off on a long march to the political heartland of Johannesburg and Soweto. That, like the Ayatollah of Iran, he would mobilise hundreds of thousands of people to go on the rampage, shooting and killing. As Carlin (2008:76) put it, the anxiety was whether it would be possible for South Africa to go through the first twenty-four, forty-eight, seventy-two hours without a major people's uprising and without a revolution. But it is the opposite that happened; when Mandela was released there was peace. This is because he chose the path of radical forgiveness.

of the aftermath of conflict and violence manifests through silent killing that lasts for many months and sometimes years. For example, the wounds of the 2011 post-election conflict and violence have been manifesting through guerrilla attacks and silent killing that has kept on recurring till the present. In addition, the greatest manifestation of wounds always occurs in the manner in which the destruction of lives and property is done with little provocation. This happens because internal wounds are still fresh in the people's memory. Therefore, in the situation of conflict and violence, people need help to offer forgiveness that may bring about the healing of internal wounds. As Lapsley and Karakashian (2012:211) point out, people could be terribly wounded by violence, yet it is possible to reach deep into their hearts and touch a place that enables them to move into the future with a measure of peace and hope.

One of the ways people may be helped in the healing process of reconciliation is the narrative preaching of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. This is because the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts a forgiveness that resulted in healing the wounds of the evil done in the past. So we read in Genesis 50:19-20 that Joseph said to his brothers, don't be afraid. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. And he spoke to them kindly and reassured them that he would provide for them. Joseph's words and actions become the healing of memory that seals the reconciliation between him and his brothers. This is because, after this episode, we are told that the family of Jacob prospers in Egypt (Exodus 1:7). This means both Joseph and his brothers were healed from the wounds and the guilt of the conflict and strife in the family of Jacob.

In the same manner, the pastoral preaching of reconciliation should help people to acquire the ability to demonstrates the forgiveness that Lapsley and Karakashian (2012:279) call releasing oneself from those who caused pain, sorrow and wounds in life. Lapsley and Karakashian capture this forgiveness that brings about healing in the story of an Iraqi, Abdulsattar Younus, who was healed of his wounds caused by violence during a visit to New York. Abdulsattar was invited to a healing memory workshop in New York, and participants from the United States expressed to him their grief and regret about the terrible things the United States had done to his country. The action of the American participants visibly moved Adulsattar and he told them that, until his trip to the United States, his only experience of the country's citizens was soldiers at the end of a gun. Now, he said, he had discovered that there were peace-loving people in the United

States who not only opposed the war but cared deeply about the Iraqi people and who carried their own pain as well (Lapsley & Karakashian 2012:283-284).

The confession of Adulsattar demonstrated forgiveness, which depicts the healing of a deep wound. This is very relevant to preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, where the experience of the evil done in the past had formed a bad image of some ethnic, tribal and religious groups in the mind of some people. There is a situation where some people consider all the people who belong to certain ethnic, tribal and religious group as wicked, evil and violent due to the activities of a few individuals among them. For example, there are some Christians who think of every Muslim as a killer and potential Boko Haram member. In the same manner, some Muslims think of every Christian as being wicked and a killer. This is because of the deep wounds caused by individuals among Christians and Muslims that has resulted in stereotypes.

Therefore, pastoral preaching of radical forgiveness demands helping people to sometimes make a confession of regret and grief caused by the evil done in the past. In other words, the pastoral preaching of reconciliation should empower Christians to say sorry to Muslims for the evil done in the past. In addition, the pastoral preaching of reconciliation should empower ethnic groups and tribes to say sorry to the other ethnic groups or tribes for evil done in the past. On the other hand, the pastoral preaching of reconciliation should also empower people to be able to say I have forgiven all the evil that was done to me in the past. This study considers the story below as an illustration of a sermon of how forgiveness may be a balm for healing.

A woman named Val lost her husband and seven children in the Rwandan genocide, and she survived with her daughter of sixteen years. She and her daughter were only spared to sleep with tens of men who were actively involved in the genocide, and these were the ones who killed her family in front of her and her daughter. Val and her daughter stayed in that terrible situation for two months. Sadly her daughter died from being raped by so many men. Val was traumatised to the point of attempting suicide three times without success. She lost consciousness, went to the hospital and stayed for over eight months. She lost weight, she couldn't eat or sleep and later on she went back to her home, but never healed from the abuse. She hated all the Hutus and didn't want to speak to them, and from time to time she would go back to the hospital and stay for a

few weeks, and come back home for few days, and go to the hospital again; that was her life. It was later discovered that Val's illness was the hate she carried towards the Hutu men who killed her family and raped her and her daughter. It took several months to help her realise that living with hate was a disease and that there was no way she could get away from it unless she forgave and became free. One day she made a decision to forgive every single man who was involved in the killing of her family. She started helping their families and going to prison with their spouses to see them, taking them food and telling them she has forgiven them. When some of those men were back from prison they lived side by side with Val. They lived together peacefully. One day, one of the men's wife was about to give birth in the middle of the night and had no money for a taxi, and they called Val around 2.00 am to help. Not only did she paid for the taxi to take the woman to hospital, but she went with her and stayed with her in hospital for two days, and then they returned home together with the baby (Kalisa 2015:2-3).[60]

As such, the task of the pastoral preaching of reconciliation is to use the word of God to help people to voluntarily give up the right to seek repayment from those who harmed them. People need to be helped to acquire the ability to directly refuse to hurt those who hurt them in the past. They should refuse vengeance, payback, and the infliction of pain. Instead, they should remain as friendly as possible (Keller 2005:2). They need help to be able to overcome the burning human desire to make those whom they consider as enemies feel guilty for how they treated them in the past.

6.6.3.3 RADICAL FORGIVENESS AS A FERTILE GROUND FOR HUMAN FLOURISHING

There may never be meaningful progress without forgiveness. This means that division, conflict and violence have denied people the environment to flourish. Volf (2015:ix) consider a flourishing life to be the life that is lived well, the life that goes well, and the life that feels good. In addition, Volf argues that a flourishing life evokes an image of a living thing, thriving in its proper environment. For example, the Psalmist's description of a tree planted by a stream of

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[60] Research has shown that failure to forgive may be a risk factor for heart disease, high blood pressure and a score of other chronic stress-related illnesses. Medical and psychological studies have also shown that a person holding on to anger and resentment is at an increased risk for anxiety, depression and insomnia, and more likely to suffer from high blood pressure, ulcers, migraines, backaches, heart attack and even cancer. But genuine forgiveness may transform these ailments (Tutu & Tutu 2014:18).

water, which yields its fruits in its season and whose leaves do not wither, is an image of this. In addition, a flourishing life depicts a sheep lying down in green pastures and walking beside still waters (Psalm 1:3, 23:2) (Volf 2015:ix).

The greatest source of a flourishing life is a good environment. This underscores the study's argument that forgiveness is a great necessity for human flourishing, because forgiveness creates an environment for people to flourish. This concurs with Volf's (2015:173) argument that, in order to decrease the motivation for conflict and violence, human beings need alternative visions of human flourishing that are centred not on bread alone, but on reconciliation. Elsewhere, Volf argues that life marked by love for God and neighbours is the end of human flourishing. In other words, human flourishing is how well people develop their capacities as created in the image of God and employ them so as to better love God and their neighbours (Volf 2015:15-16). This is because division, conflict and violence have denied people the environment to maximise the potential God has given them. In a warring situation, it is forgiveness that creates an environment for people to flourish. This is graphically displayed in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, where forgiveness created a flourishing environment. In other words, in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers we are enabled to see how forgiveness led the family of Jacob to prosper and multiply and increase, thereby fulfilling God's plan for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So we read in Genesis 47:27: "Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increase greatly in numbered." And in Exodus 1:7 we see that the "Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them".

These episodes depict what emanated from Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers for the evil done to him in the past. This means that, in a situation of division, conflict and violence, forgiveness opens a pathway to a bright future. This is because forgiveness breaks the vicious circle of conflict and violence created by revenge and vengeance. Tutu (1999:209) says it is only moving on to forgiveness that breaks the power of the circle of reprisal and counter-reprisal that characterises a situation of division, conflict and violence. One could also add that, unless the circle of conflict and violence is broken by forgiveness, there can be no future. The story of Father Michael Lapsley is a graphic example of how radical forgiveness may be an enabling environment for human flourishing.

In 1990, Father Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest active in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, opened a letter bomb that nearly killed him. The blast took both his hands and one of his eyes. But Father Lapsley overcame all the negative feelings that come with such an experience. He testifies that he lost a lot in the bombing, but he also gained a lot. This is because he realised that if he remains consumed by hatred, bitterness and a desire for revenge, he will be a victim forever. This means the attackers would have failed to kill his body, but hatred, bitterness and a desire for revenge would have made them kill his soul and above all denied him the environment for human flourishing (Lapsley & Karakashian 2012:22-23). Father Lapsley became a source of healing for many people who were wounded by conflict and violence in different countries of the world by organising and facilitating healing of memory workshops.

It is indeed very difficult to do away with the bitter feeling toward activities of ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence in Nigeria, Northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt region that are denying people the environment to flourish. For example, it is very difficult for one to stop thinking how different it would be if the commitment, determination, resilience, resources, and all the effort of Boko Haram were directed to acts of kindness and voluntary services to humanity. Nigeria would be better than what she is today, Northern Nigeria would have been well developed and more advanced in all human endeavours. In addition, how different it would be if people in the Middle Belt region were to be devoted, committed, determined and believed in the best of the region as they are faithful, loyal and passionate about their ethnicity, tribe, religion and the like. The region would have been a place of opportunities, a home of flourishing, an arena of prosperity, a kingdom of fulfilment, and a home of peace and harmonious life.

6.6.4 MOVING FROM ENCLAVEMENT TO EMBRACE

Another task of the pastoral preaching of reconciliation is to help people move from ethnic enslavement, tribal enclavement and religious enclavement to inter-ethnic embrace, inter-tribal embrace and inter-religious embrace. For about twenty-two years there was enclavement in the family of Jacob, which was characterised by pain, trauma, and inconsolable mourning. So we read in Genesis 37:34-35: "Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refuses to be comforted. No, he said, I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." Because of many years of enclavement, the brothers did not recognise Joseph when they met him in Egypt (Genesis 42:6).

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Prolonged years of enclavement made Joseph's brothers doubt his forgiveness for the evil they did to him in the past (Genesis 50:15-18).

In the Middle Belt region, inter-personal and communal relations in terms of ethnicity, tribe and religion are characterised by enclavement. This has resulted in fear, suspicion, mistrust, bitterness, anger and mutual antagonism that has led to the relocation syndrome, which has been witnessed in some flashpoints like Kaduna and Jos. For example, in Kaduna there have been demographic shifts from the so-called perceived unsafe areas to safe areas. The Muslim areas became *Mecca*, while Christian areas are tagged as *Jerusalem* and *Tel Aviv.* Similarly, in Jos, Muslims areas are considered to be *Zamfara* and *Bin Ladin* zones, and Christian areas are called *New Jerusalem* (Gwamna 2010:30-31; Daniel 2014:29). Ethnic and religious enclavement has poisoned the mind of some Nigerians so that, in every aspect of life, they think of ethnicity or religion. For example, when a person fails to win an election the interpretation will be that a certain ethnic group or religion is against his or her tribe, ethnic or religious group. Sometimes disqualification of employment for lack of merit may be interpreted to means an effort to thwart the progress of a certain tribe, ethnic group or religion. Even the inability to secure admission to institutions of learning because of a lack of basic requirements is sometimes considered as an underground plan against the progress of a tribe, ethnic group or religion. And, because ethnic and religious enclavement is deep in the imagination of people, a mere argument or misunderstanding between two people of different tribes, ethnic groups or religions easily degenerates into shedding of blood and destruction of property between two or more ethnic groups and religions.

Therefore there is a need to help people to acquire the ability to move from enclavement to embrace. And one of the means to do that is the pastoral preaching of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. This is because, in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, we are enabled to see how Jacob's family moved from enslavement to embrace. That is, we are enabled to see the family of Jacob coming together, living together and prospering together after many years of hostility and separation. This study considers the following steps, called "The drama of embrace" by Volf (1996), as being very relevant to the pastoral preaching of the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers.

6.7.4.1 EMBRACE AS OPENING UP OF ARMS

The first act of embrace entails *opening up of arms*. According to Volf, the opening of arms entails using body language to reach the other. In other words, the opening of arms indicates a code of desire for the other, and a "sign that I have created space in myself for the other to come in and that I have made a movement out of myself so as to enter the space created by the other" (Volf 1996:141; Cilliers 2012:504). As a matter of fact, the opening of arms suggests an open door in the self and a gesture of invitation (Cilliers 2012:504). The concept of the opening of arms is aptly pictured in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph demonstrated opening of the arms when he dissuaded his brothers from being distressed for selling him into slavery in Egypt (Genesis 45:5, 8). He embodied the opening of arms when he kissed all of them and wept over them. He opened his arms when he talked with them (Genesis 45:41-15). In all these episodes, Joseph indicates the desire for his brothers and the whole family of Jacob to come together, stay together and grow together. Joseph's actions and deeds serve as an open door from him and a gesture of invitation to his brothers and the family of Jacob to be reunited and to prosper together. This is very relevant to preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because the hurt, pain, wounds and all forms of damage created by ethnic and religious conflict and violence require body language more than speeches or words of mouth. Mutual suspicion, mistrust, fear and all forms of insecurity in relating to the one are very deep in the imagination of the people, which only the body language of the opening of arms may defuse.

The study considers Mr Nelson Mandela of South Africa as the prototype of the opening up of arms that may be used as an illustration of a sermon. He was harassed for a long time before his arrest, making a normal family life impossible. He had spent twenty-seven years in prison by the time of his release on 11 February 1990. Nevertheless, Nelson Mandela did not emerge from prison spewing words of hatred and revenge. He was not hell-bent on paying back the perpetrators of apartheid with their own coin, seeking to give them liberal doses of their medicine. Rather, he was a man regal in his dignity, overflowing with magnanimity and desire to dedicate himself to the reconciliation of those whom apartheid and the injustice and pain of racism had alienated from one another. He displayed a heroic embodiment of embrace as the opening of arms. No one could have accused him of speaking glibly and facilely about

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forgiveness and reconciliation. No one could say that he knew nothing about suffering (Tutu 1999:39).

6.7.4.2 EMBRACE AS PROVIDING A SIGNAL OF RELIANCE

The second act of embrace is providing *signal of reliance*. Embrace as providing a signal of reliance is doing that which will move the other to make the movement toward the self, but its power to do so is the power of gestured desire, creating of space, and opening boundaries, opening barriers and opening frontiers of the self, not the power that breaks the boundaries of the other and forces the fulfilment of desire (Volf 1996:143; Cilliers 2012:505). Providing a signal of reliance is displayed in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph provided a signal of reliance for his brothers to move from Canaan to Egypt by conveying the message of Pharaoh's assurance of giving them the best of the land of Egypt. He gave them the carts given by Pharaoh for carrying their children, wives and their father (Genesis 45:16-20). Joseph also made a signal of reliance when he gave his brothers gifts of new clothes, and to their father ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey (Genesis 45:16-23). All these served as a sign of assuaging Joseph's brothers' doubt, fear and mistrust of being maltreated in Egypt either by Pharaoh or Joseph.

The truth is, ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence have battered relationships in the Middle Belt region and it has become very difficult, if not impossible, for people to do anything without ethnic or religious sentiment. The past occurrences have made people lose trust and confidence in people to act without ethnic or religious bias. As such, reconciliation as offering a signal of reliance needs substantial signs that may convince the other that one's motive is genuine and trustworthy. In other words, to assuage the fear, feeling of insecurity and doubt of the other there is a need for concrete action.

6.7.4.3 EMBRACE AS CLOSING THE ARMS

The third act of embrace is *closing the arms*. "This is the goal of embrace, the embrace proper, which is unthinkable without reciprocity…" (Volf 1996:143). The action is two-sided because it is the action of the one as well as the other. This means the other has reciprocated the gesture and makes a move to the opening arms, and both close arms in embrace. Cilliers (2012:505) argues that, "[i]n this embrace, the identity of the self is preserved and transformed, and the alterity of

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the other is affirmed and respected". The closing of the arms can be seen in how Jacob's family moved from Canaan to Egypt (Genesis 46:6-7). There was the closing of arms when Joseph welcomed his father and his brothers and introduced them to Pharaoh. So we read in Genesis 47:1-2): "Joseph went and told Pharaoh my father and brothers with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen. He chose five of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh." Again we are enabled to see the closing of arms when Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children (Genesis 47:11-12). This study's understanding of embrace can further be illustrated by the marriage between the son of a victim and the daughter of a perpetrator in Rwanda. A man whose father was killed married the daughter of the person who killed his father and they are living together with two children (Father Ubald Rugirangoga).

In addition to spiritual, moral and psychological well-being, preaching reconciliation requires an emphasis on physical well-being. Therefore, the next section will consider economic preaching as a mechanism for promoting reconciliation through physical well-being.

6.7 ECONOMIC PREACHING OF RECONCILIATION

On the one hand, division, conflict and violence cause poverty, and on the other hand poverty causes division, conflict and violence. As Kajom (2012:180) says:

> The greater a country's poverty, the more likely it is to face violence and civil war. People are more likely to rise up against their government when their economic predicament is bad and getting worse. Rebel groups find it easier to recruit new members when poverty and unemployment are widespread.

Therefore, to promote reconciliation in a situation of division, conflict and violence there is a need for economic preaching. As Wilson and Letsosa (2014:1) argue: "Preaching and development must be part of a process of poverty alleviation by the church." This means the Word of God should be used to give people in a situation of poverty both vision and inspiration that may empower them to ameliorate their circumstances and bring about liberation from their

situation of poverty. The vision that may inspire and empower people to ameliorate their situation of poverty and unemployment is a proper grasp of God's ability to change every situation. That is, they should have a proper understanding that help and deliverance in all situations and circumstances come from God.

In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, God's help and deliverance for the family of Jacob in the situation of famine may be seen in sending Joseph to Egypt. This is clearly stated by Joseph when he revealed himself to his brothers in Egypt. We read in Genesis 45:7-8: "God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God." Elsewhere, when Joseph's brothers were overwhelmed with fear of revenge, Joseph again directed their attention to God's plan for the deliverance of the family of Jacob and of mankind. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50:20). In the above episodes, Joseph points out the key source of the economic preaching of reconciliation, that is God's ability to help and deliver humankind from all unfavourable situations. Instead of focusing on the evil done by his brothers in the past, Joseph directed their attention to the fact that his going to Egypt was an instrument of God's provision for the family of Jacob and the saving of humankind from famine (see section 5.4.1).

Therefore, economic preaching in a situation of poverty and unemployment should help people to acquire the belief that help can be obtained from a higher power (God). Through preaching, people should be given the assurance in their situation of poverty and unemployment that God has not deserted them, that he is on their side and will deliver them from the causes of poverty and from the situation of their poverty. Stated differently, economic preaching should help people who feel they are hopeless and useless to see themselves as capable and having worth and value. Economic preaching should also inspire, motivate and drive people in the situation of poverty to open up new vistas, a vision, and hope to ameliorate their situation and thus to collaborate in God's work of liberation (Payne 2005:12; Wilson & Letsosa 2014:6). Pieterse (2001:3) says economic preaching is preaching that helps people acquire a vision of a better life through their faith in God. Having a proper understanding that help can be obtained from God enables human beings to acquire the ability to work and support themselves and fellow human beings with the fruit of that work and also experience the fullness of life, which includes meeting

basic human needs (Myers 1999:26; Corbett & Fikkert 2011:56-57). Therefore the following are ways in which economic preaching of reconciliation may be preached.

6.7.1 ECONOMIC PREACHING AS STIMULATING TRUST IN GOD'S ABILITY

The economic preaching of reconciliation demands the proclamation of the Word of God to stimulate trust in God's ability to use human actions to bring about the desired change. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2008:1418) defines 'stimulant' as "something that promotes activity, interest, or enthusiasm". Economic preaching as a stimulating trust in God ability therefore means the proclamation of God's word to help people develop an interest in or enthusiastic actions dependent on God's ability to bring about positive change in their life. That is economic preaching should stimulate or motivate people in a situation of poverty and unemployment to take action, believing that God is able to use human effort and actions to bring about liberation.

The focus of this study, however, is the use of the word of God to help people in the Middle Belt region acquire the ability to look inward for the solution to poverty instead of looking unto the elites, who manipulate them for their selfish interests. In other words, economic preaching in the Middle Belt region should motivate and inspire people to focus their attention on some of the resources with which God has blessed them. The ability to look within for a solution to poverty may be seen in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. God saved the family of Jacob and humankind from famine by using Joseph's actions of collecting all the food produced in the seven years of abundance in Egypt and storing it in the cities (Genesis 41:48). This means God, in his sovereignty, brought about great deliverance from famine through the human effort and actions of Joseph. In the same manner, economic preaching should motivate people in a situation of poverty and unemployment to trust in God's ability to use their efforts and actions to bring about liberation. In other words, people should be helped to acquire what this study calls a "can-do spirit" of dependence on God's ability to use human effort and action to bring about change in their situation of poverty and unemployment.

Therefore, the key component of stimulation in economic preaching is helping people to see what God has blessed their environment with and also the wisdom He had bestowed upon humankind to convert the blessing into basic human needs. The focus of this study is on how

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preaching may stimulate people to depend on God's ability to bring about liberation from the situation of poverty and employment through human effort and the action of cultivating crops in the Middle Belt region. For example, Chemonics International Inc.[61] (2002:5) observed that "[s]esame is an important export crop in Nigeria, and Nigeria has a substantial role in the global sesame trade. Annual exports of sesame from Nigeria are valued at about US$20 million and Nigeria is the primary supplier of a sesame seed to the world's largest importer, Japan". However, the company laments that the potential embedded in sesame crops is poorly recognised. In addition, Nmadu and Marcus (2012:40) point out that "Nigeria ranked first in terms of the percentage of total hectares of ginger under cultivation but her contribution to total world output is too low compared to other countries." Nmadu and Marcus (2012) attribute the low ginger output of Nigeria to the fact that most of the production is undertaken by smallholders and traditional farmers with rudimentary production techniques and low yields. In addition, the smallholder farmers are constrained by many problems, as they do not see it as a business enterprise, therefore are not adequately focused on a profit-maximising motive.

The potential of these types of crops may be used as sermon illustrations to motivate and stimulate people to make an effort and take action with trust in God's ability to bring about liberation from their situation of poverty and unemployment. This is because poverty is rampant among the farmers in the rural areas. In addition, in most cases, poverty is the root cause of the mass exodus of people, particularly youths, from rural to urban areas in search of greener pastures. This makes them vulnerable to the elite's manipulation to bring about ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence.

However, economic preaching is not about stimulating people only, but incorporates helping people to realise their strength and capabilities. The next section will look closely at this.

6.7.2 ECONOMIC PREACHING AS CREATING AWARENESS

Economic preaching as creating awareness in a context of poverty is well defined in the words of Bevans and Schroeder (2004:373), namely faith "using the word to assist people toward self-

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[61] Chemonics International is a non-governmental organisation founded in Washington, D.C. by the company's first president, Thurston F. Teele. Its mission, then and now, is to promote meaningful change around the world, helping people to live healthy, more productive, and more independent lives.

awareness of their own power, subjectivity, strengths, and capabilities". Preaching in the context of poverty is using the written Word of God to help people in a situation of poverty to become aware of their power, subjectivity, strengths and capabilities. The use of God-given power, strength and capabilities to transform a situation can be seen in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. For example, Joseph said, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. The food should be stored so that the country may not be ruined by the famine (Genesis 41:33-36). Elsewhere we are told that Joseph collected all food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city, Joseph put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand in the sea (Genesis 41:48-49). In these episodes, Joseph used his God-given wisdom to advise Pharaoh on how to plan against the famine. He also used his God-given wisdom and ability to collect food during the years of abundance and stored it against the years of famine. This is very relevant for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region, because there is a need to help people to focus their attention on strategies of promoting human well-being, not ethnic and religious divisions, conflict and violence. Therefore the following are strategies that may help to promote human well-being.

6.7.2.1 AWARENESS ABOUT PRESERVING GOD'S BLESSINGS OF FOOD

One of the ways economic preaching may promote human well-being is to help people see the need for preserving some of God's blessings of food. In other words, economic preaching should help people in a situation of poverty and unemployment to know that post-harvest food losses are one of the important sources of food insecurity in the Middle Belt region. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that post-harvest food losses, besides being a serious threat to food security, exacerbate the condition of poverty in rural households, whose income stream depends on the ability to store excess farm produce for a later date (Okoedo-Okojie & Onemolease 2009:155). As such, an aspect of the proffered solution to poverty is to help people see the need to acquire knowledge and skills to preserve God's blessing of some food crops that become rotten within a short period of time. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, post-harvest food storage brought about liberation and generated income in the situation of famine. So we read in Genesis 41:56-57: "When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the

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storehouses and sold grain to Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe everywhere."

It may be argued that preserving God's blessing of food was what God used to re-connect Joseph and his brothers after many years of separation, resulting in reconciliation. In Genesis 47:14 we are told that, "[w]hen Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do you just keep looking at each other? I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may and not die". This is very important in the context where there are divisions, conflict and violence over land for farming. In other words, people sometimes fight over land because they believe having large farmlands may serve as food security in the situation of post-harvest food losses. This means proper storage may enable people to overcome the fear of food losses and invariably minimise divisions, conflict and violence over farmlands.

For example, in the Middle Belt region, in Nigeria and in West Africa, yam (*Dioscorea* spp.) is a food and cash crop; it plays an important role in food security and in the livelihoods of millions of people. The crop is produced more for sale than for home consumption; in the Middle Belt region, 60% of the harvest, after omitting for seed, is sold and only 40% is consumed in the farmers' households. The crop attracts a high price in the urban markets because it is patronised by high-income consumers (Mignouna et al. 2014:6). But, as Umogbai (2013) aptly observes, the most common problems faced by farmers are the losses of yam post-harvest and during storage. Wastage of yam generally occurs because the apparent surplus harvest during the harvest season cannot be consumed within a short period. Few months after the harvest there is always a diminishing availability of yam produce (Umogbai 2013:1). That is, yam tubers are generally abundant and sold cheaply, but later (especially during the planting season) they become scarce and expensive. This is because a lot of yam becomes rotten and, if it is kept on the farm it may be stolen. This sometimes creates a heavy loss for farmers and the people in the yam business. Verter and Becvarova (2014:39) say that, if there are a means of preserving the yam crop after harvest, it will improve the quality and quantity of production and create business opportunities for many unemployed people in Middle Belt region.

The fact that the farming of yam plays an important role in food security and in the livelihoods of millions of people in West Africa, and in Middle Belt region in particular, becomes a point of

departure in the economic preaching of creating awareness about the necessity for post-harvest storage of yam for long-time usage. Therefore, economic preaching should help people to see the need to explore various modalities of storing God's blessing of yam. For example, Adamu et al. (2014:28) suggest the technique of using wooden boxes in which yams can be stored for up to six months. He further argues that if yam could be stored in a wooden box without heavy losses, supplies could become steadier, the price would fluctuate less and farmers would be encouraged to grow yam by being assured of a steadier income.[62]

6.7.2.2 AWARENESS OF POST-HARVEST CROP PROCESSING

Besides post-harvest food storage, economic preaching can create awareness that may bring about liberation from poverty and create employment opportunities through post-harvest crop processing. That is, preaching can be used to help people see the need to transform primary agricultural products into other useful products with the aim to preserve or improve the quality of agricultural products and thereby minimise losses. The motivation behind the use of preaching to create awareness about the need for post-harvest crop processing is based on Udoh (2009:78) and Alonge's (2011:58) observation that, in the past decades and to the present day, Nigeria has suffered a tremendous loss of food products due to lack of proper and adaptable processing and storage facilities. Losses have been estimated at 50-70% of production. This means people are sometimes poor not because they lack, but because of what they have gets lost due to a lack of processing facilities.

But Udoh argues that the food-processing subsector has the potential to enhance food production in African countries in general, and in Nigeria in particular (Udoh 2009:78). Alonge (2011:58) adds that the processing and storage of these crops can be a source of income as well as create jobs for the unemployed, because the processing of agricultural products minimises waste,

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[62] In addition Ofor et al. (2010:1) argue that improvements in the indigenous systems of storage include low-cost storage techniques like proper selection of the crop for storage; curing of yams; provision of adequate ventilation using night-time air to reduce transpiration to the barest minimum; construction of shelves for storage of yam tubers to enable regular inspection and prevent damage; as well as construction of a well-ventilated shed over the shelves to give adequate protection from rain and sunlight. Ventilated pit storage with improved temperature ranges of 21°C to 24°C and relative humidity of 83.9% to 93%, are expensive when compared with those of the traditional barns, but cause a significant reduction in storage losses. Advanced storage methods include the use of refrigerated structures at about 15°C, in combination with the use of fungicides. However, the high capital cost and the need for technical support makes this method unfeasible. The use of gamma radiation to inhibit sprouting is also a promising alternative method of yam storage.

ensures safe storage of the farm harvest, and feeds agro-based industries with raw materials. For example, grapes are farmed in Stellenbosch in South Africa (where I am doing my studies), and there are many factories in the town that process the grapes into wine. The farming of grapes therefore is encouraged and, at the same time, the factories create employment. A graphic illustration of how processing farm products may create employment opportunities for people in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria can be seen on the Solms-Delta Wine Estate located 15 km outside the town of Franschhoek in South Africa. In 2005, Solms-Delta established what they called the "Wijn de Caab Trust" to benefit 200 historically disadvantaged residents and employees of the Solms-Delta Wine Estate. The Wijn de Caab Trust now has a 33% equity stake in Solms-Delta, and the profit from wine sales has been used to build and refurbish decent and comfortable homes for the workers and their families, create recreational facilities, and provide a myriad other social services (including private education and healthcare) that benefit all (Societas Homiletica 2016:17).

Imagine if there are ten factories that process ginger, yam, groundnut, sesame or benniseed and mangoes in the Middle Belt region – many people will be encouraged to farm the crops. It will create employment opportunities for many. The processed products will also improve the living standards of the people in the region, where crops that are always available for only a season would be available throughout the year.

6.7.2.3 AWARENESS OF GOD-GIVEN ABILITIES AND SKILLS

Another way in which economic preaching may create awareness that brings about liberation from poverty and creates employment is awareness of God-given abilities and skills for self-employment. In the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the display of God-given ability can be seen in how Joseph interprets Pharaoh's officials and Pharaoh's dreams, and it happened exactly as interpreted by Joseph (Genesis 40:8-23; 41:22-32). It can be argued that it was the God-given ability to interpret dreams that made Joseph have access to Pharaoh and also catapulted him into the exalted position of second-in-command of Egypt. There are similar stories in the Bible, like that of Bezalel and Oholiab, God filled them with skills and knowledge in all kinds of crafts to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship (Exodus 35:30-35). Huram, the Bible tells us,

was highly skilled and experienced in all kinds of bronze work (1 Kings 7:14). These people used their skills and abilities to constructs the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple that King Solomon built.

The abovementioned stories can be used in economic preaching to create awareness of God-given abilities and skills among humankind. That is, it can help people realise that God created human beings in his image and endowed them with all forms of abilities and skills for the betterment of humanity. This is relevant in preaching reconciliation, because there is a need to help people know that, if the determination, commitment, resilience and risk they employed in fighting ethnic and religious conflict and violence are converted into promoting the well-being of humankind, poverty will be alleviated and unemployment will be reduced. There are many people who lack self-confidence and the ability to believe in their God-given ability. As such, this preaching may help them.

The story below can be used as sermon illustration for economic preaching to create awareness of how a Kenyan who made a fortune by grafting apple trees he found in the forest with Israeli apples can provide great motivation for the use of God-given abilities for liberation from poverty and creation of employment opportunities.

Peter Wambugu, a Kenyan farmer, was challenged to create an alternative in farming apples. He heard stories from his village mates about apple trees, hidden in the forest by the Mau Mau fighters, to provide them with food. He went into the forest to search for the apple trees. He found them, uprooted them, and planted them on his father's farm. Out of curiosity, Wambugu grafted the apple trees he found in the forest with the Israeli variety that was already on his father's farm. After nine months, the apple tree seedlings thrived, matured and bore fruit, which were more than thrice the size of ordinary apples in the market. He sold the apples to the locals and they loved it. Within a short period, officials of the Kenya Agricultural Research Livestock Organization (Karlo) paid his farm a visit. The Karlo officials were so impressed they named the apple variety "Wambugu apple". So far, he has created eight apple varieties, which he grows on his 20-acre farm in Ihwa village nestled between Kinunga and Ihururu Hills in Nyeri County. Wambugu apples are in great demand; he is the major supplier to supermarkets, hotels and institutions. Recently, he won a tender to supply fruit to the Mt Kenya Safari Club in Nanyuki.

And there have been requests for his fruit from Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Denmark (Nyawira 2015).

6.7.3 ECONOMIC PREACHING AS MOTIVATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF KOINONIA

Economic preaching as motivation for the practice of koinonia is the use of the Word of God to help people practise community life in which they stand by each other in all affairs of life (Acts 2:42-45) (Wilson & Letsosa 2014:6). According to Lillie (2008:55), "Koinonia is variously translated as 'partnership,' 'communion,' 'fellowship,' taking its root meaning 'sharing' from koinonia, which means 'share in' and koinonia which means 'one who goes shares with you' or a 'participant' such as a 'partner.'" Economic preaching as motivation for the practice of koinonia relates to a situation in which the congregation can be addressed on the need for care of the poor in the immediate context of the congregation. From sermons, the congregation can be made aware of the needs of the people in their situation of poverty in the vicinity of the congregation (Pieterse 2012:3).

The focus of this study, however, is on the use of preaching to motivate the practice of a community life in which people enter into partnership or share with one another in the form of empowering one another. That is, the use of preaching can help people acquire the ability to use their position, wealth, knowledge and connections to empower one another. This study's understanding of koinonia is depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. For example, Joseph used his position to empower his brothers by settling them in the best part of the land of Egypt. In other words, Joseph empowered his brothers by creating a good environment for them to prosper as shepherds. Elsewhere we are told that the "Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number" (Genesis 47:27). In the same manner, economic preaching as motivation for the practice of koinonia in the Middle Belt region should focus on helping people to acquire the ability to practise fellowship, communion and partnership in which people will be empowered to be liberated from their situation of poverty. According to Pieterse (2012:3), preaching can be used to motivate and inspire people in the projects of the congregation in which they can practise their care for the poor as social capital. In the Middle Belt region, preaching may be used to motive the practice of koinonia in *bada kaka* (microcredit).

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According to Oruonye and Musa (2012:66), *bada kaka* is a form of traditional microcredit scheme between small-scale farmers and agricultural farm produce traders (middlemen) in the Middle Belt region. *Bada kaka* is the Hausa term for the borrowing of a certain amount of money or goods by farmers before or during the raining season from creditors, which they repay with farm produce worth about 100 percent or more during harvest (Yoms 2013:38-39). The traders usually approach the farmers whom they trust on the understanding that the farmers need credit for their farming activities in the season. They negotiate the amount the farmers will pay based on cost per bag of the crop – maize, beans or other crops as the case may be. The negotiation is usually done in the presence of the village/ward head and some elderly members of the community. These people serve as witnesses to the agreement in the event of default. After the harvest, the farmer pays back his debt in kind (based on the amount and number of bags agreed upon). This is done without prejudice to the current market price of the agricultural commodity (Oruonye & Musa 2012:66).

The point of departure in economic preaching as motivation for the practice of koinonia of *bada kaka* is Oruonye and Musa's (2012:66) observation that the practice of *bada kaka* is very exploitative. This is because farmers are made to dispose of their farm produce at a very low price that is not commensurate with their effort or labour. The amount of money advanced to the farmer depends on the number of bags he/she is certain to deliver at the end of the farming season. This trend often places the farmer in a disadvantage position, whereas the traders reap the fruits of the farmer's labour. Therefore, economic preaching should motivate the community of believers as a church to replace the exploitative traders by giving needy farmers credit for their farming activities in the season. Yoms (2013:89) says the role of the Christian church in community development is to integrate the proclamation of the Gospel with the obedience to the command to love one's neighbour. When the Gospel is preached and the hearers respond to it, the hearers who are in a situation of poverty and unemployment will be glad when the preacher also seeks to meet their physical needs. The amounts the farmers will be required to pay should be determined in a manner to empower them economically.

As a matter of fact, the practice of koinonia as bada kaka should include empowering those who lack the capital to put their God-given abilities and skills into the practices of catering, selling of foodstuff, electronics technician, graphic designing, laundering, painting, hairdressing, weaving,

tea making, poultry farming, fish farming, vehicle mechanic, carpentry etc. The church, either through individuals, agency groups, connecting groups or the welfare committee of the congregation, should identify those who have an interest in the development of their abilities and skills and give them credit for their activities. The negotiated amount should reflect God and the church's concern for those in the situation of poverty and unemployment. This means the focus should not be on making a profit, but rather empowering people to liberate them from their situation of poverty and unemployment.

6.7.4. ECONOMIC PREACHING OF HOPE

Economic preaching in a situation of poverty and unemployment demands the used of the Word of God to stir up and stimulate hope. This is because people in the situation of poverty are clouded by despair, anxiety, fear, doubt, sadness and uncertainties (Vos 2007:18). De Klerk (2007:177) says "[p]overty, hunger, and feelings of hopelessness are companions of desperate conditions. To be hungry, cold and without shelter, cannot contribute to the feeling of hope and well-being". The feeling of hopelessness in the situation of poverty is well illustrated in the valley of the dry bones, when the Israelites remonstrated that "[o]ur bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off" (Ezekiel 37:11). Vawter and Hoppe (1991:167) state that, "[t]o the exiles, Judah's future looked bleak. The nation, its institution, its political power were dead. There was nothing to suggest that circumstances would change". Clement (1996:147) adds that "[i]t was the zero of Israel's existence, a catastrophe that was made all the more fearful because there now appeared to be no reasonable avenue of hope left". The people during the time of prophet Ezekiel were in a situation of despair and hopelessness. As a matter of fact, the exile during the time of the prophet Ezekiel can be compared with the struggles, inner feelings and unspoken language of poverty and those suffering in the situation of unemployment. It depicts how those in poverty felt and what ran through their minds. As such, one of the greatest needs of people in a situation of poverty is hope.

Hope is the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best (Dictionary.com 2016). Hope is action impelled by an assertion of confidence, that is, acting in the mode of 'can'. Hope is a feature of the emotional life. It is rooted in the sense of time, which gives us awareness of change. We imagine future events and relate to them. This relation affects the present, for it presupposes a view of reality and existence in the future (Stock 2001:594).

Hope rouses the attentiveness of all human senses so that people can grasp the chances for things they hope for, wherever and whenever they present themselves. When all the senses are attentive, reason is the vehicle that conveys the knowledge of change (Moltmann 2012:3). In the Scripture, hope is used synonymously with faith, for example: "Hope is the anticipation of what is yet to happen or not yet seen" (Romans 8:24-25), and "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1).

 Based on these definitions, this study considers the economic preaching of hope as the proclamation of the Word of God to stir up the expectation of a positive outcome in unfavourable conditions. The economic preaching of hope in the strictest sense means using the Word of God to stir up faith in God or to keep faith in God alive during unfavourable conditions. Pieterse (2001:115) asserts that economic preaching of hope is to tell people that God is on their side and that he will deliver them from the causes of poverty and from the situation of poverty. The sermon therefore must inspire and motivate people to find vision and hope to ameliorate their own situation and thus collaborate in God's work of liberation (Pieterse 2001:115). This means that, through preaching, people in a situation of poverty and unemployment may be giving a vision that what God has done in the past is a guarantee of what He will do in the future.

The Old Testament prophets give a vision of a guaranteed future in a hopeless situation or in suffering. For example, the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:11-14) preached that:

> This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and have done it, declares the Lord.

The prophet told the exiles that their situation was not hopeless because God's transformative Spirit blows through every situation in order to work newness toward life. The power of God's spirit is able to open graves and take the exiles back to their own soil (Brueggemann 1997:22). In the same manner, economic preaching should focus on helping people in a situation of poverty to acquire confidence that there is no hopeless situation in God's sovereignty and that even the dead

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can be restored to life. Vos (2007:18) says that preaching must give hope to the hopeless by encouraging the listener's longing and thirst for God. The sermon must chase away chaos and darkness and must convince people to trust in God.

The economic preaching of hope in the situation of poverty and unemployment should also stimulate and inspire people to think and act positively in their situation. For example, due to a negative perception of the self in the situation of poverty and unemployment, some youths in the Middle Belt region have joined dangerous groups like area boys, gangsters, thugs and associations of drug addicts. This exacerbates their situation of poverty because such association imprisons them into believing that their situation cannot change. But, through the economic preaching of hope, this category of people may be helped to acquire the vision that nothing is impossible in God's Sovereignty. In other words, through the proclamation of the Word of God, people in a situation of poverty should be helped to acquire the vision of self-liberation from the shackles of poverty. For hope stimulates faith in God that leads to self-liberation. Clement (1996:148) argues that "[o]nly hope can counter depression. Only hope can revitalize shattered and exhausted bodies. Only hope can penetrate the darkness and uncertainty of the future to provide a beacon of light".

Furthermore, the economic preaching of hope should help people look beyond their present challenges. In the context of the Middle Belt region, the economic preaching of hope should stimulate people to believe the possibility and even work toward the realisation of having processing facilities for ginger, sesame or benniseed, groundnut, yam and mango. Through the economic preaching of hope, some youths may be helped to avoid taking solace in joining area boys, gangsters, thugs and associations of drug addicts. Through the economic preaching of hope, some youths may be transformed from the perception and the psyche of the loosely organised gangs of street children, teenagers who aimlessly roam the streets of cities and even villages in the Middle Belt region because they believe that there is no hope for them. The economic preaching of hope may motivate such people to stop extorting money from passers-by, to stop selling illegal drugs, to stop performing odd jobs that include killing, kidnapping and breaking into people's home. Through the economic preaching of hope, such people may be helped to acquire the ability to use their God-giving resources of time, strength, wisdom and

knowledge to cultivate commercial crops and process some crops to create employment opportunities.

It can be argued that the situation of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence confronting Nigeria, and the Middle Belt region in particular, is very difficult for one to come up with a perfect solution. As such, this study considers a call for lamentation as another mechanism of preaching reconciliation, and that will be looked at in the next section.

6.8 PREACHING RECONCILIATION AS A CALL FOR LAMENT

According to Ackermann (Ackermann cited in Cilliers 2006:5), 'lament' means "wailing of the human soul, a barrage of tears, reproaches, petitions, praise and hope which beat against the heart of God". Lament is a time of heart searching and deep reflection by individuals, households or communities about their relationship with God. It is a time of questioning the integrity and faithfulness of one's or people's relationship with God. It is a time when individuals, households or communities turn to God in humility, repentance and undivided commitment. Lament is a time of reconciliation with God as the creator of human beings, and reconciliation with fellow human beings and the ecosystem. The Bible says, "[i]f my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). The prophets of the Old Testament used calamities, suffering and exile to challenge their people to evaluate their faithfulness in relation to God and one another, and the above passage was the theme of their preaching.

The situation of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence confronting Nigeria, and the Middle Belt region in particular, makes it very difficult for one to suggest a perfect solution. This is why I concur with Cilliers (2007b:4) that some challenges confronting humankind call "for a public outcry" because all people who suffer cry out because it is a creaturely and instinctive reaction. Although Cilliers (2007b:4) calls for a public outcry in the context of suffering from HIV in South Africa, the principle is relevant to the situation of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Public outcry is necessary for the Middle Belt region because of the frequent destruction of property, and the maiming and killing of human beings created in the image of God in the name of ethnic,

tribal and religious differences, which call for lament. The manner in which the elite are creating divisions, and are fighting and destroying property and encouraging killing among ethnic, tribal and religious groups for their selfish ambitions, calls for lament. The rate at which area boys, associations of drug addicts and gangsters are occupying cities and villages demands lamentation. It also is a reality that many families, especially in the rural areas, are living from hand to mouth. The problem of urban areas swelling up with youths, both graduates and uneducated, roaming about looking for what to do to earn a living, with some ready to do anything for pay, calls for lament. Furthermore, issues like forgiveness, repentance and living together without ethnic, tribal and religious prejudices demand lament. Humanly speaking, these problems have no easy answers or human quick fixes other than a call for public outcry. As Cilliers (2007a:159) points out, this situation calls for the "voicing of the suffering of the individual or a community within the community of believers, in the presence of God". There are many studies on how people may live in peace and unity, but ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence recur without end. Sometimes one cannot help but doubt if any human effort will succeed in bringing these issues to an end. One of the options is a public outcry, which can be well communicated through preaching.

The issue of public outcry is not strange to the Christian faith, because the Bible, both the Old and the New Testament, is full of examples of individuals or faith communities crying out to God when calamities like ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence befall them. Pressler (2002:144) aptly asserts that "[o]utcry is a motif that runs through both testaments of the Bible. From Abel's blood crying out from the ground (Gen. 4:10) to Jesus crying out from the cross (Matt. 27:46), those suffering violence or oppression cry out to Yahweh, and Yahweh responds". For example, when the Israelites suffered in Egypt, they cried out. So we read in Exodus 3:7: "The Lord said I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering." The book of Judges has several examples of Israelite communities crying out to God in their suffering (Judges 3:9, 15; 4:3; 6:6). Pressler (2002:144) notes that

> God does not forget the cry of the afflicted. Even where affliction is the result of
> God's own judgment, God hears the people's cries and raises up a deliverer.
> Judgment and mercy battle in the heart of God, but mercy has the final word.

In the same manner, preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region should call for lament. That is, preaching should help people to sincerely question their integrity and faithfulness in relation to God, their fellow human beings and creation itself. It is a time to beat against the heart of God with sincere repentance, sincere worship, sincere praises, sincere prayers and sincere commitment. The Bible is full of examples of the people of God beating against the heart of God, and of Him turning their moaning into celebration. Cilliers (2007a:159) asserts that "[l]ament beats against the heart of God". Talking from the context of people suffering from Aids, he says there is a lot of beating of the heart of God that needs to be made, because whenever there is suffering, death and orphans, the church should lament. This principle is applicable to the context of the violence in northern Nigeria and in the Middle Belt region in particular. Whenever there are ethnic, tribal and religious clashes, the church should beat the heart of God. Whenever a suicide bomber kills or makes an attempt to kill or bomb a place, the church should lament. As a matter of fact, the church should beat the heart of God for any sign of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions before it degenerates into ethnic, tribal and religious conflict and violence. If Christians in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria were to be dedicated to beating the heart of God with the same zeal and passion they have for promoting ethnic, tribal and religious differences, they will soon be celebrating the reconciliation they desire, because God will respond to their cry.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In the beginning of the chapter, you were told that the church in the Middle Belt region has a role in promoting reconciliation. And one of the ways the church can promote reconciliation is to speak and live a message of reconciliation; that is, the church should embody reconciliation. In addition, the church can promote reconciliation by constantly bringing Christians of diverse ethnic groups and tribes together as the family of God. Furthermore, the church can promote reconciliation and social cohesion by emphasising Christian identity.

In this study it has also been argued that reconciliation can be promoted through the use of various preaching techniques. For example, the journey to reconciliation can be guided through prophetic preaching; that is, preaching that is countercultural and a challenge to the status quo that can offer hope for the new day to come. Another preaching technique considered in the

chapter is biographical preaching. This means that preaching reconciliation demands the projection of a biblical character for people to see what is expected of them.

This study has also argued that people in a situation of division, conflict and violence can be led through the steps to reconciliation by pastoral preaching. That is, reconciliation can be preached by sermons that address people's personal concerns, whether these be on an immediate or global level. Another technique for preaching reconciliation that was brought to the fore in this chapter is economic preaching. This type of preaching can help a person to acquire a vision that inspires and empowers them to ameliorate their situation of poverty and unemployment. Finally, the study argues that the situation of division, conflict and violence and the journey to reconciliation in the Middle Belt region have no easy answer or human quick fixes. As such, preaching reconciliation should incorporate preaching as a lament. That is, preaching should help people to sincerely question their integrity and faithfulness in relating to God and their fellow human beings. Preaching should also stimulate people to beat against the heart of God with sincere repentance, worship, praise, prayers and commitment to God.

The next chapter will summarise the entire research, including the research question, the objectives of the study and the themes of reconciliation drawn from the study of the text of Genesis 37-50 and preaching techniques for preaching reconciliation.

Chapter 7

Summary, Recommendations and Concluding Remarks

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter considered how reconciliation may be preached using different preaching techniques, such as pastoral preaching, prophetic preaching, economic preaching, biographical preaching, and preaching reconciliation as a lament. The aim was to explore how these preaching techniques may be used to guide the people of the Middle Belt region through the aspects of reconciliation found in the narrative of Genesis 37-50. These aspects are transformation or change of thoughts and actions that enable reconciliation, forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past, and coming together, staying together and growing together as a symbol of true reconciliation.

Chapter 7 is a summary of the entire research, including the research question, the objectives of the study and the themes of reconciliation drawn from the study of the text of Genesis 37-50. After drawing some conclusions on the relevance of the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, the chapter identifies some gaps and makes some recommendations.

7.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION REVISITED

The aim of the research was to explore the potential of the narrative of Genesis 37-50 for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region. In other words, the objective of the study was to explore how the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers could be a preaching technique for promoting social cohesion in the situation of ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. As such, the research is a contribution to narrative preaching as a mechanism that may be used by the church to engage with societal ills. Stated differently, the study is a contribution to narrative preaching as a tool that may be used by the church to guide people on the journey of reconciliation and social cohesion in a context where ethnic diversity, tribal diversity and religious diversity are mobilised to marginalise, discriminate against and exclude the other.

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The aspects of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, that is a change of thought, change of action, forgiveness devoid of confession of evil done in the past, and reconciliation as coming together, staying together and prospering together, were used to merge the conceptual understanding of reconciliation that transforms the ethnic, tribal and religious relations in the Middle Belt region. Therefore, the research question that guided this study was:

What role, if any, may narrative preaching play as a means to further reconciliation in the context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria, with specific reference to the potential of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50?

A careful study was undertaken of the way the characters are portrayed, that is the portrayal of characters in the conflict found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. As the story unfolds, we are enabled to see various aspects of reconciliation in action. That is, the characters in the story exhibit characteristics of transformation or change that enables reconciliation and forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past, and the characters are depicted as coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation. This showed that narrative preaching of the story of Joseph and his brothers could contribute to reconciliation and social cohesion in a context of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 served as the introductory chapter, and this was followed by Chapter 2.

7.3.1 CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2 analysed the contextual factors influencing ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in the Middle Belt region. The chapter provided a description, analysis and interpretation of the Middle Belt region and its potential for fuelling ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence. The questions that assisted the study in providing a conceptual understanding of the contextual factors that influence ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria were: "What is the influence of the constitution of the Middle Belt in ethnic, tribal, and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in

the region? "What are some of the factors that fuel ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflicts and violence in Middle Belt region?" "What are the negative impacts of ethnic, tribal, and religious divisions, conflicts, and violence in the Middle Belt region?"

The goal of the chapter was to understand the constitution of the Middle Belt region and some of the actions and inactions that influence ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence in the region. In addition, the chapter aimed to create a desire for reconciliation through highlighting the negative impact of ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the region. To achieve this, the chapter analysed the literature on ethnicity and religion, as well as newspapers, magazines and the literature on the contextual factors fuelling the ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region. The analysed literature revealed that the negative impact was the dehumanising of humankind in the name of ethnic, tribal and religious differences. This was especially true when considering the unrelenting nature of the conflict and violence, which have lasted for many years.

Therefore, the study argued that the Middle Belt region of Nigeria is fertile ground for ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence because it is a region that plays host to the largest number of ethnic minorities in Nigeria. In other words, it is the region in Nigeria that has the highest collection of diverse ethnic groups, diverse tribes with diverse cultures, diverse languages, and diverse religions. This diversity is mobilised at every level of society, to marginalise, discriminate against, exclude and dehumanise humankind, thereby resulting in perpetual ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence that is incomparable with any other region in Nigeria. In addition, the ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence are escalated by the traditional African concept of ethnicity, the traditional African concept of land and boundaries, the elite's manipulation of ethnicity and religion, religious fanaticism, and the poverty and unemployment in the region.

I also argued that preaching would be a good tool for the church to use to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region because the region has the highest concentration of Christians in Northern Nigeria. The reason why Christianity is predominant in the Middle Belt region is due to the policies of the colonial rulers against missionaries in Northern Nigeria. The British colonial policy on religion in Northern Nigeria allowed Christian missions to operate in

the non-Muslim areas but prevented them from entry into areas considered dominated by Muslims, keeping the missions among the non-Muslims groups in the central belt of Nigeria. This saw the emergence and spread of Christianity as the dominant religion in the Middle Belt region. In addition, preaching would be a good tool for promoting reconciliation because the church is the only institution that has structures that penetrate every nook and cranny of the region, thereby playing host to both victims and perpetrators of ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence.

7.3.2 CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3, titled 'Techniques of using narratives for preaching reconciliation', responded to the following questions: "What theory of narrative preaching is appropriate for preaching reconciliation in Middle Belt region?" "What is the importance of using narratives for preaching reconciliation?" "What is the importance of stories and storytelling in Africa?" "How could stories be used to create a point of identification with characters in preaching reconciliation?" "How could stories be used to shape imagination in preaching reconciliation?" "How could stories be used as sermon illustration in preaching reconciliation?"

The aim of the chapter was to explore how Eugene Lowry's theory of narrative preaching, called the 'Lowry Loop', might be helpful in guiding listeners on the journey of reconciliation. In addition, the chapter sought to know why narratives may be used in preaching reconciliation. An exploration of the value of stories in African society was undertaken to know the relevance of narratives for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region. Furthermore, the chapter explored the potential embedded in using stories to create a point of identification, the use of narratives to shape imaginations, and the use of sermon illustrations in preaching reconciliation.

Therefore, I argued in the chapter that Eugene Lowry's theory of narrative preaching might be useful in guiding listeners in the process of reconciliation, because Lowry structured narrative preaching into five constructs, which the study restructured into four constructs, similar to Osmer's four task of practical theology, namely upsetting the equilibrium, that is creating the itch for the hearers the way a narrative does – to get them engaged (what is going on?), to dig deeper into ambiguity to determine all that is really at stake, or to probe the causative ingredients responsible for the situation (why is this going on?), experience the gospel (what ought to be

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going on), and anticipate the consequences of embracing the gospel in the sermon (how might we respond?).

In addition, it was argued that narrative is considered as a technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because, through narratives, listeners are lured along a journey of exploration based on real-life stories to a place where they could exclaim, "Aha! I get it!" at the end of the sermon. In other words, narratives influence human beings' everyday life. This means narrative is the way humankind mirrors life within the context of their world. This is because narratives make characters available as resources that listeners use to engage in the work of the character. And, through narratives, the preacher situates the listener in his or her world to contextualise the message in the situation of the audience.

In addition, narrative is considered as a good technique for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region because stories are used in African culture to pass the traditions and beliefs of a particular society from one generation to the next. They have also been used to pass on codes of behaviour and social values, and to maintain social order. African folktales positively influence how people mirror their situation and teaches them values and attitudes.

Furthermore, it was argued in the study that preaching reconciliation requires shaping imagination, because conflict and violence create images that may block information from penetrating the mind of listeners. This is why preaching reconciliation should go beyond the communication of mere information about God to others; rather, it should convey a picture of the performance of God's action in the midst of incomprehension and deafness of ears. This means preaching reconciliation should include images drawn from the biblical text or from contemporary life. It should be images that appeal to the senses and engage the hearer through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

The study also considered the used of sermon illustrations as a mechanism that may help in giving people models comprising ingredients for reconciliation. Models showing compassion instead of revenge to those who wronged one in the past call for stories. In addition, other models include forgiveness without demanding for repentance of confession of the evil done in the past. Furthermore, models like accepting, living with, walking with and growing with those who wronged one in the past may be demonstrated with stories. This is because it is humanly

difficult not to consider revenge concerning the evil that was done in the past. It is humanly difficult to forgive evil done in the past. It is humanly difficult to accept, live with, walk with and grow together with those who have wronged one in the past.

7.3.3 CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4, titled 'Themes for preaching reconciliation in the narratives of Genesis 37-50', responded to the following questions: "What is the nature of biblical narratives?" "What is the literary context of the narrative of Genesis 37-50?" "How are divisions and conflicts being depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers?" "How do characters contributes in fuelling the divisions and conflicts in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers?" And "How can the narrative of genesis 37-50 be a point of identification for preaching reconciliation in Middle Belt region?"

The aim of the chapter was to explore the role of narratives of the Bible literature. In addition, the chapter sought to understand the cause of conflicts found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. A further aim of the chapter was to investigate ways in which the characters in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers fuelled conflict and violence. The chapter also aimed at bringing to the fore how pain, anguish, sorrow and dehumanisation are rooted in division, conflict and violence. The chapter further aimed at exploring the potential enshrined in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region.

Therefore, I argue that Biblical narratives are the portion of the Bible that is written in the form of a story. These stories are artistically arranged in a way that the event moves to a level of tension, called climax, and then descends to a level of resolution. There are certain actions of the character that trigger the conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. These actions in one way or another are connected to the issue of who will inherit the promised land and become the elected offspring. For example, Joseph's brothers hated him because he gave an evil report of them to their father. It is argued in the chapter that the aim of the report was to make Joseph a favoured candidate for inheriting the promised land and becoming the elected offspring. Another action that triggered the conflict between Joseph and his brothers was that Jacob bought a richly ornamented robe for Joseph. The garment was a symbol of Joseph's authority and favoured position in the family. The intent of the garment was to raise Joseph to a level of inheriting the

promised land and becoming the elected offspring. Furthermore, there was conflict between Joseph and his brothers because he had two dreams, each of which pointed out that Joseph would become a leader over his brothers and his parents.

The conflict in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is also triggered by some actions of Joseph's brothers. The starting point of their actions begins to manifest when their hatred degenerated into jealousy – a feeling that has the potential for killing. It is this feeling that resulted in Joseph being dehumanised by being thrown into a cistern. The act of throwing Joseph was more or less the same as the way in which the body of a dead person who is held in great contempt is dumped into a pit or grave. Besides being dumped into the cistern, Joseph was relegated to a mere thing, a commodity that could be sold, bought, leased or exchanged by his brothers. They priced and sold him based on the amount a slave is worth. The Ishmaelites also treated him in the same manner by selling him to Potiphar in Egypt. The status of a slave remained with Joseph until the time he became a governor in Egypt.

As a framework for preaching reconciliation, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts character defamation. This means conflict and violence are rooted in people giving a bad image of one another. Joseph's brothers hated him because he gave an evil report about them to their father. In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts egocentrism as a fertile ground for conflict and violence. It portrays a situation in which some people consider themselves superior to other people. The misinterpretation of Joseph's dreams by both Joseph and his brothers portrays Joseph in the position of a ruler over the family of Jacob. The story also pictured injustice as a root cause of conflict and violence. Joseph's brothers hated him because their father treated him differently than his brothers.

The narrative of Joseph and his brothers furthermore depicts protracted pain and anguish. This means conflict and violence bring about pain and trauma. This is graphically portrayed in the names of Joseph's sons (Genesis 41:51-52). The first son was named Manasseh, meaning God has caused him to forget the long years of suffering, hatred, rejection, dehumanisation, slavery, injustice and all forms of maltreatment in Canaan and Egypt. Furthermore, the assertion that, when Jacob saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, his spirit revived (Genesis 45:27); this shows that, for about twenty-two years, Jacob was in pain and anguish over the perceived

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death of Joseph. All his sons and daughters made an effort to bring about a change and have Jacob put an end to the rites of mourning. But Jacob remained adamant and confessed that he would continue to mourn until death. With such confession and inconsolable mourning the family peace was shattered for many years.

7.3.4 CHAPTER 5

Chapter 5, titled 'Healing and reconciliation in the narrative of Genesis 37-50', responded to the questions: "How do the characters in the narrative of Joseph and brothers move from strife, conflict and separation to reconciliation?" "How is forgiveness as a key aspect of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers?" "What were the bases of coming together, staying together and prospering together that mark true reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers?" "How can the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers be a framework for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region?"

As such, the aim of the chapter was to seek to understand how the transformation of characters became a process of reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers. The chapter also aimed at bringing to the fore the necessity for forgiveness devoid of confession of the evil done in the past as an aspect of the journey to reconciliation. In addition, the chapter aimed at exploring the possibility of people coming together, staying together and prospering together for the sake of building a common future. The chapter also intended to explore the potential of using reconciliation as depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation in the Middle Belt region.

Therefore, in this chapter, I argued that Joseph and his brothers are depicted having undergone transformation or a change of view. The transformation was from a point of view of killing to a point of view of sustaining life. The transformation of Joseph's brothers' point of view is pictured in their confession of how they treated Joseph when they sold him into slavery. Joseph is also depicted a showing a change in point of view in the manner in which he allowed nine of his brothers to take food to the starving family of Jacob and also gave his brothers provisions for the journey to Canaan.

Besides the change in point of view, another sign of transformation as a process of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is a change in action. Joseph's brothers are

depicted as showing a change in action when Benjamin was considered a thief. For example, after the silver cup was found in Benjamin's sack, signifying he will become Joseph's slave, the brothers loaded their donkeys and returned to Egypt with Benjamin, instead of abandoning him as they did to Joseph. In addition, Judah, when talking to Joseph, revealed how leaving Benjamin in Egypt would affect their father. In the end, Judah offered to become Joseph's slave in the place of Benjamin. Joseph's brothers' actions in this episode depicts them as being committed to the well-being of their brother Benjamin and their father Jacob.

Another process of reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers is forgiveness. Joseph is depicted as having forgiven his brothers without any demand for confession of the evil done in the past. As a matter of fact, he focuses his forgiveness on how God turned the evil done to him by his brothers into the saving of human lives – their lives inclusive. Joseph did not blame, scold, accuse or in any way make his brothers feel guilty because of how they treated him in the past.

The actual reconciliation in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers, however, is depicted in how the sons of Jacob walked into the future together. For example, Joseph and his brothers became united after many years of strife and separation for the survival of Jacob's family in the midst of famine. The coming together of the sons of Jacob depicts the reconciliation of the brothers, because reconciliation demands the coming together of warring parties. Furthermore, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as staying together in the region of Goshen in Egypt. This signifies that, after many years of conflict and separation, the sons of Jacob did not only come together, but they stayed together. In addition, Joseph and his brothers are depicted as growing and prospering together. That is, they did not only come together and stay together, but they grew together, thereby fulfilling God's promise of making the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob a great nation.

Therefore, I argue that the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers is a framework for preaching reconciliation because it has the potential to fill people's mind with the imagination of reconciliation. For example, the reconciliation depicted in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may be used to shape the imagination of hatred, anger and thoughts of revenge to thoughts of life. Furthermore, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts sacrificing one

freedom for the well-being of the other, whoever she or he might be. In addition, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts forgiveness without demanding confession of the evil done in the past. This may be used through preaching to shape an imagination of forgiveness in the situation of division, conflict and violence. In other words, the narrative of Joseph and his brothers may be used through preaching to dismantle imagination that focuses on hurt, wounds, pain and anguish inflicted in the past, and enthrone the imagination of acceptance, accommodation, unity and social cohesion. The narrative of Joseph and his brothers depicts the sons of Jacob coming together, staying together and growing together after many years of strife and separation. Therefore, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers as a framework for preaching reconciliation means using preaching to help people acquire a vision of embracing one another, irrespective of ethnic and religious differences. This includes walking into the future together.

7.3.5 CHAPTER 6

Chapter 6, titled 'The preaching techniques of preaching reconciliation', responded to the following questions: "What is the role of the church in promoting reconciliation?" "How may preaching be used by the church to promote reconciliation?" The aim of the chapter was to explore ways in which the church may promote reconciliation and social cohesion. In addition, the chapter sought to identify preaching techniques that may be used in preaching the reconciliation found in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers.

As such, I argued that the church in the Middle Belt region has a role in promoting reconciliation. And one of the ways the church may promote reconciliation is to speak and live a message of reconciliation; that is, the church should embody reconciliation. In addition, the church can promote reconciliation by constantly bringing Christians of diverse ethnic groups and tribes together as the family of God. Furthermore, the church may promote reconciliation and social cohesion by emphasising Christian identity.

In this study it was also argued that reconciliation can be promoted through the use of various preaching techniques. For example, the journey to reconciliation can be guided through prophetic preaching. That is, preaching as countercultural and a challenge to the status quo, and preaching that offers hope for the new day to come. Another preaching technique considered in the study is biographical preaching. This means preaching reconciliation demands the projection of a biblical

character for people to see what it means to be reconciled and stay together. The study also argued that people in a situation of division, conflict and violence can be led through the process of reconciliation by pastoral preaching. That is, reconciliation can be preached by sermons that address people's personal concerns, whether on an immediate or a global level. Another technique for preaching reconciliation that was brought to the fore in the study is economic preaching. This is preaching that helps a person to acquire a vision that inspires and empowers them to ameliorate their situation of poverty and unemployment. Finally, the study argued that the situation of division, conflict and violence and the journey to reconciliation in the Middle Belt region have no easy answer or human quick fixes. As such, preaching reconciliation must incorporate preaching as a lament. That is, preaching should help people to sincerely question their integrity and faithfulness in relating to God and their fellow human beings. Preaching should also stimulate people to beat against the heart of God with sincere repentance, worship, praise, prayers and commitment to God.

7.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions are offered for further research:

7.4.1 *Empirical investigation to be conducted*

This research was purely theoretical, that is all the discussions were conceptual and the analysis was primarily done through the use of existing literature because there is sufficient data on the subject matter. Therefore, more research opportunities should be made available for empirical investigations to be conducted in order to test theories and the acceptability of the theoretical claims and recommendations made in this study for the narrative preaching of reconciliation.

7.4.2 *The study could be relevant to different contexts*

Although this research was concentrated in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, it could also be relevant to other parts of Nigeria, of Africa, and the world. Hence this investigation opens opportunities for research in the field of using preaching to engage with social ills globally and, most importantly, in Nigeria and the Middle Belt region in particular, where ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence have caused unimaginable losses and setbacks.

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7.4.3 *Central undertaking of exegetical research of Genesis 37-50*

As this research was specifically within the discipline of homiletics, the biblical exegesis of Genesis 37-50 was referred to in detail, but exegesis was not the central undertaking of the research. Therefore, exegetical research on the reconciliation in the narrative of Genesis 37-50 could be undertaken in order to add more insight into the reconciliation depicted in the text.

7.4.4 *Further research on the potential of preaching for promoting reconciliation*

Preaching is a promising mechanism for promoting reconciliation and social cohesion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, especially regarding the fact that the church is the only institution that has structures that penetrate every nook and cranny of the region. Therefore, more research is required on preaching that could open doors for reconciliation and social cohesion among ethnic groups, tribes and religions, as well that contributes toward a more conducive environment that will allow for nation building in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.

7.4.5 *Further research on the power of stories for promoting reconciliation*

Looking at the difficulties involved in the process of reconciliation. For instance it sometimes is very difficult to talk about reconciliation in an atmosphere of ethnic and religious division, conflict and violence. The study therefore recommends that further research should be undertaken on the use of stories as a tool for promoting reconciliation and social cohesion. This is because stories have the power to capture people's interest and also inspire them to embark on a journey that they may not like.

7.4.6 *Further research on the elements of reconciliation*

The elements of reconciliation have diverse approaches and applications. In other words, the context and situation determine the approach and application of the elements of reconciliation. Therefore, the study also recommends that further research on the elements of reconciliation, such as forgiveness, repentance of evil done in the past, compassion, radical love and promotion of human well-being, be undertaken in the Middle Belt region. This is because the richness of these elements is their diverse approach and application. Hence multiple types of research on

what may make reconciliation possible are needed to promote social cohesion and harmonious life in the Middle Belt region.

7.5 FINAL REMARK

As the theme of the study is "Preaching Reconciliation: A Study of the Narrative in Genesis 37-50", this study contributes towards an understanding of the importance of the use of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers for preaching reconciliation. As the study has established, the ethnic, tribal and religious divisions, conflict and violence in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria are complex and seem to be motivated by the traditional African concept of ethnicity, the traditional African concept of land ownership and boundaries, the manipulation of ethnicity, tribes and religion by the elite, religion fanaticism, and poverty and unemployment. It was established in this study that narrative preaching of the story of Joseph and his brothers will guide the people of the Middle Belt region through the journey of social cohesion by fostering a desire to build a common future. The desire for building a common future may help people change their thoughts and actions toward one another after many years of strife. The desire for a common future may help people repent of the evil done or proposed. The desire for building a common future may help people to forgive one another without demanding repentance of evil done in the past after years of strife. The desire for building a common future may help people to come together, stay together and prosper together after many years of strife.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that narrative preaching of the story of Joseph and his brothers is relevant in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. This is because using the story may create a point of identification with the characters in the story and also help shape people's imagination about reconciliation and social cohesion. The story of Joseph and his brothers may also be used as sermon illustration to enable people to understand what it means for people to change their thoughts about one another, change their actions in relation to one another, forgive one another without demanding confession of evil done in the past, and to come together, stay together and prosper together.

The reality of the situation in the Middle Belt region is one of ethnic, tribal and religious division, conflict and violence, which means there can be no future without a change of thought toward one another, there is no future without a change of action toward one another, there is no

future without forgiveness and there is no future without coming together, staying together and prospering together. Therefore, through this study, the researcher has sought to lay the groundwork for social cohesion and a harmonious life, despite ethnic diversity, tribal diversity, cultural diversity and religious diversity.

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