Christine Schliesser

On the Roles of Religious NGOs in the Context of Development and Peacebuilding:
Christian Churches and Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda

1. Introduction

World-wide, the number of people dying of hunger is decreasing (cf. United Nations, We Can End Poverty). While this is certainly good news, the bad news is that violent conflicts have become the biggest driving forces of hunger, as the Global Hunger Index of 2015 reports. Alex de Waal points out in this report, "war and famine, two fearsome horsemen, have long ridden side by side (…). The impact of *all* … forms of violence on development is major and severe; the victims are poorer, more vulnerable and hungrier than others" (de Waal 2015: 23). This draws our attention to the connection between violent conflict and hunger or between conflict resolution and development, respectively. While the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 entirely missed the importance of peace as the foundation of development, their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 now rightly promote "peace, justice and strong institutions" (SDG 16).

One factor in particular has been perceived as one of the biggest threats to peace and social harmony: religion. Even before ISIS, examples ranging from the crusades and the Thirty-Years-War up to the Northern Ireland Conflict and Boko Haram quickly come to mind, all shaping our view of "religious violence". After years dominated by a one-sided perception of religion as promoting violence and conflict, however, religion's capacity for conflict resolution and peacebuilding is now increasingly becoming recognized as well. As Josephine Sundqvist points out, "There exists a growing awareness among peace workers that religion is a central factor to consider in order for a reconciliation process to lead to sustainable peace" (Sundqvist 2011: 158).

This contribution examines the roles of religion and religious NGOs within the context of development and peacebuilding. While both development and peacebuilding are connected, the focus here is on peacebuilding.

Does religion make a difference in peacebuilding? Are there any specific capacities and competences that religious actors can resort to in this field? If so, what are these? Two parts will serve to delineate possible answers to these questions. The first part briefly addresses some of the problems that arise with the terms religion and "religious" violence, respectively. The second and main part explores the productivity of religion itself for conflict resolution by utilizing the case study of Christian churches and their efforts aimed at peacebuilding and reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda.[1]

2. Some Problems with the Term "Religious" Violence

Jeffrey Haynes points out that "Increasingly, it appears, conflicts between people, ethnic groups, classes, and nations are framed in religious terms" (Haynes 2007: 57). Religion often plays a role, for instance, in the conflict with the so-called Islamic State, in the conflict between Israel and Palestine or in the conflict in Northern Ireland. It is less clear, however, what exactly this role consists of. Oftentimes, religion is portrayed as a conflict promoting, if not conflict initiating, power that can drive people to fight and even kill each other. As Charles Kimball puts it, "It is somewhat trite, but nevertheless sadly true, to say that more wars have been waged, more people killed, and these days more evil perpetrated in the name of religion than by any other institutional force in human history" (Kimball 2002: 1).

Kimball's approach reveals a major, yet somewhat typical problem in discussions on "religious" violence. While he refers to the evil perpetrated in the name of religion, he does not adequately describe what he understands by "religion". This does not come as a surprise, however. As Brian Wilson states with respect to religious studies, the inability to find a definition for "religion" has become "almost an article of methodological dogma" (Wilson 1998: 141). As "no universally accepted definition of religion or faith exists" (Ware *et al.* 2016: 324), it remains equally unclear what counts as religious and what does not. In my native Germany, for instance, many of the characteristics we might attribute to religion—ecstatic experiences, regular gatherings, devotion, group singing, ascription of absolute value, sense of identity and belonging—can also be ascribed to soccer.

---

1 The following deliberations draw upon the analysis of academic literature as well as on an empirical investigation based on material available online and semi-structured qualitative interviews I conducted in Rwanda between 2016 and 2018.

William Cavanaugh points us to another possible characteristic of religion, absolutism. Absolutism refers to a transcendent reality that lays claim to absolute validity beyond dispute, thereby accounting for the alleged danger of religion. Cavanaugh then proposes a "test" for what counts as "absolute": absolute is that for which one is willing to kill. Referring to his own native USA, he asks rhetorically: "What percentage of Americans who identify themselves as Christians would be willing to kill for their Christian faith? What percentage would be willing to kill for their country?" (Cavanaugh 2004: 44). Cavanaugh thus points to the functional similarity between the two categories "religion" and "nationalism".

Hence, if it is not clear what constitutes religion, it is also not clear what constitutes "religious" violence, either. According to Cavanaugh, "religion and violence" arguments rather serve a specific need of Western societies. In these arguments, we encounter a broader post-Enlightenment paradigm that constructs a clear dichotomy between the private—religious sphere on the one hand and the public—secular sphere on the other. The religious then becomes easily associated with irrational, possibly dangerous, impulses that must give way to reasonable arguments in the public sphere. "The danger is that, in establishing an Other which is essentially irrational, fanatical, and violent, we legitimate coercive measures against that Other" (Cavanaugh 2004: 35). This results in a selective legitimization of violence: s*ecular* violence is rational, peace promoting, tightly controlled and sometimes unfortunately necessary in order to end *religious* violence that is irrational, fanatical and totalitarian. Cavanaugh thus calls into question the usefulness of speaking of "religious" violence in contrast to "secular" violence.

With the conceptualizing of violence resisting a clear-cut division into religious vs. secular, some argue that the concept of religion ought to be kept out of this complex entirely. Jonathan Z. Smith claims that "religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study [and] has not independent existence apart from the academy" (Smith 1982: xi).[2] The plausibility of this line of thinking, however, is seriously hampered by the fact that it ignores the life-world reality of a vast number of people worldwide. Rather than trying to avoid religion altogether, this contribution is based on Jacques Waardenburg's premise to understand and treat as "religion" whatever is understood and described as "religion" by the respective communities and interlocutors (Waardenburg 1986; cf. Frazer and Friedli 2015). It is in the

---

2 Timothy Fitzgerald emphasizes that the term religion presents in itself a form of mystification and should therefore be avoided (Fitzgerald 2000).

same vein that the phenomenon of "religious" peacemaking is understood and critically examined here.

3. Religion and Peacebuilding: Resources and Productivity

In both public and academic debate, "religious" conflicts receive much attention; religious peacemaking, however, gets considerably less publicity. The following case study of religious peacebuilders, namely Christian churches in post-genocide Rwanda, will serve to unfold the long neglected relationship between religion and peacebuilding.

3.1 Religious Peacebuilding in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Roughly half the size of Switzerland, Rwanda is one of the smallest African countries. It leapt to the world's consciousness in 1994, when after three years of civil war, the shortest genocide in recent history took place in Rwanda. Between April and July 1994, up to 1,000,000 men, women and children were brought to death. Most of the victims belonged to the Tutsi minority (about 15 %), but large numbers of the Hutu majority, who refused to participate or tried to protect Tutsi, were killed as well. Hutu and Tutsi (and Twa, a minority of about 1 %) are not conventional ethnic descriptions, rather, they refer to groups of people sharing the same language and culture. These terms used to designate a profession. Whoever had more than ten cattle was considered a cattle-breeder and a Tutsi. If some of the animals died, the owner became a farmer and a Hutu. It was the colonial powers, first Germany and after World War I, Belgium, who enforced these differences by their strategies of divide-et-impera. Richard Friedli thus rightly reminds us of the "historical responsibility of Europe" (Friedli 2000: 138f.) with regard to Africa's ethno-political conflicts.

Since Rwanda's independence in 1962, repeated massacres with hundreds of thousand people killed on both sides bore witness to the deep-seated violence and conflicts that pervaded the entire region. The genocide beginning in April 1994, however, distinguished itself by a number of characteristics. Beside its preventability and its systematic preparation, it stood out due to its brevity, its intensity and also its cruelty. Many victims were burned alive, buried alive or hacked to pieces and thrown into latrines to die. It is due to the violent sexual excesses in the Rwanda genocide that sexual violence and sexual mutilation has since become considered and punishable as a genocidal crime (cf. the so-called "Akayesu ruling" of 1998). Another dis-

tinction of this genocide is that victims and perpetrators oftentimes knew each other. They were neighbors, friends, even family.

While being one of the smallest countries, Rwanda is at the same time the most densely populated country in Africa. It thus does not afford the space for survivors and perpetrators to avoid each other permanently. Nowadays, even long-term prison sentences are drawing to an end and perpetrators are being released. Usually, they go back to their home villages that at the same time are often the place of their crimes and the place where the survivors live. Rwanda's government with current President Paul Kagame is aware of the challenges present in a country divided by fear, hatred and feelings of revenge. The Rwandan government has therefore turned reconciliation into a political tool in its quest for stability, development and economic growth. While Rwanda has made significant economic progress, its record concerning political freedom, freedom of speech and freedom of press continues to give rise to concerns.[3] The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) acknowledges "its control of the political sphere, citing state security and economic growth as taking priority over political freedoms" (Thomson 2015: 325).

By implementing a "National Politics of Reconciliation," the government pushes reconciliation on several different levels. On a national level, Rwanda's "National Unity and Reconciliation Commission" (NURC) was founded, which offers a number of unity and reconciliation projects throughout the country. The ethnic descriptions "Tutsi," "Hutu," and "Twa" were banned by law. Rather, Rwandan unity is now proclaimed by the official motto "We are all Rwandan." On the judicial level, Rwanda revived its traditional judicial courts, known as gacaca, to face the challenge of over-crowded prisons.[4] From 2001 until their official termination in 2012, about 11,000 gacaca courts throughout the country delivered judgments, with respected people serving as lay-judges. Different projects on the local and individual level were initiated, such as education and sensitization projects and organized encounters between perpetrators and victims.

Here, some remarks concerning the term reconciliation are called for. This term has long since emancipated itself from its former religious context and is now also at home in political and historical discourses. Con-

---

3 Reporters Without Borders' 2016 World Press Freedom Index lists Rwanda 161th of 180 surveyed nations (Reporters Without Borders).

4 [gaˈʧaʧa]. The Kinyarwanda term means "grass" and refers to the place in the village where the traditional gacaca courts take place. For a detailed treatment of the gacaca courts (Friese 2010: 59–72).

veying the hope of a "new beginning" after violent conflict, reconciliation is often employed by states in transition in their quest for stability, order and economic progress, the South African "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" being the most well-known example. According to Stephanie van de Loo, reconciliation is a "reciprocal *process* between at least two parties, who in immediate or mediated contact with each other reflect on their mutual relationship, and who aim to design this relationship in a positive and new way by mutual acceptance, as well as the *result* of this process" (Van de Loo 2009: 16).[5] Fernando Enns points out that the process of reconciliation includes "different elements such as the confession of guilt, atonement, asking and granting of forgiveness … up to a newly ordered relationship" (Enns 2013: 24).

And this is where the Christian churches come into play. With over 90 % of the Rwandan population being Christian, religious actors such as the Christian churches take a paramount position within the country's civil society (National Institute of Statistics 2012). This also accords them high significance within the nation's reconciliation process. Since the genocide, the religio-scape in Rwanda has been changing. While in pre-genocide Rwanda, the Catholic Church was the strongest religious player with about 65 % of the population and Protestant denominations making up about 18 % of the Rwandan population, tables are turning. After the genocide, the Catholic Church lost about one third of its members, while the Protestants have doubled in size and continue to grow (National Institute of Statistics 2012).

In the following discussion, the focus is on one Protestant church in particular, the Église Presbytérienne au Rwanda, in short EPR. Compared to other denominations, such as the Rwandan Anglican Church and the Pentecostal Church (ADEPR) with one and two million members, respectively, the EPR is a rather small church with about 300,000 members. Its limited size and its ties to the German-based FBO United Evangelical Mission

5 Emphasis and translation from German, CS.

(UEM)[6] account for its accessibility as a case study. At the same time, the EPR's engagement for reconciliation and peacebuilding are being echoed in similar ways in other denominations as well.

In general, one sees the Christian churches in Rwanda taking up the government's call for reconciliation. One could also argue that it is the other way around and the government is joining the churches in their reconciliation efforts. It was representatives of different church denominations, who already in 1996 issued a confession of guilt for deeds done and left undone during the genocide, the so-called Detmold Confession, and asked publicly for forgiveness (Detmold Confession; cf. Peetz 2015). Though contested both within and outside the churches, this confession of guilt paved the way for the churches', including the EPR's, further engagements in reconciliation. Reconciliation still remains on the forefront of the EPR's activities. Asked for his priorities during his presidency, Pascal Bataringaya, current president of the EPR, states: "First, evangelization and church growth, second, reconciliation. But both go together." In fact, for Bataringaya, reconciliation seems to be the basis of most other endeavors, including development. "Development and reconciliation go together. We care for reconciliation. And when reconciliation is an option, people can develop."[7]

Yet how does the EPR engage in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts? How are these linked to developmental endeavors? And what role does the Christian faith play in their activities? Three domains of peacebuilding and reconciliation emerge:

(1) Institutions: reconciliation training of their pastors and church staff;
(2) Parishes: activities linked to reconciliation and development in individual parishes and
(3) Remembrance: activities linked to the connection between reconciliation and remembrance.

---

6 The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) is rooted in three different mission organizations: the Rhenish Mission (since 1828), the Bethel Mission (since 1886), and the Zaire Mission. In 1996, it became an international communion of churches, with all its partner churches enjoying equal status. While UEM headquarters are in Wuppertal, Germany, there are regional offices in Africa (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) and Asia (Medan, Indonesia) UEM employs about 120 co-workers. UEM places particular significance on diaconia, HIV and AIDS, the rights of women and children, scholarships, development cooperation, intercultural meetings, and project support (see http://www.vemission.org/en/about-uem/who-we-are.html).

7 All quotes: Interview with Pascal Bataringaya. President of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda. Kigali, 21 February 2016.

These will now be discussed in turn.

(1) *Institutional level: reconciliation training of pastors and church staff.* Shortly after the genocide in 1996, the EPR saw the necessity for a "Centre de formation et de documentation"/"Center for Training and Documentation" (CFD). This centre, according to its self-description, is meant "on one hand, to contribute to the reconstruction of the vitality of religious denominations after the 1994 Genocide tragedy, and, on the other hand, to serve as a cornerstone to the unity and reconciliation process for the people of Rwanda" (cf. EPR Historical Background). Three strategies serve these aims. First, a theological training program directed at pastors, evangelists and lay preachers without formal bible training. Here, biblical teachings on forgiveness, healing and peacebuilding are being relayed and discussed. Second, an interfaith program for Christian—Muslim relations, exploring common resources aimed at "promoting peaceful coexistence and bringing about the holistic development of Rwandan people" (EPR Historical Background). And third, a research and documentation program to assist research on theological and pastoral issues.[8] The work of the CFD is now being supported by the newly established "Dietrich Bonhoeffer Center for Public Theology", founded in February 2016, that focuses particularly on peacebuilding and reconciliation in Rwanda and beyond.

(2) *Parish level: activities linked to reconciliation and development.* Exemplary of the different activities on the parish level linked to reconciliation and development is the parish of Remera. Here, Remera's EPR pastor, a trained mediator, leads a peacemaking group called the "lights" in reflection of Matthew 5, "You are the light of the world (…) let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven". Members of the "lights" seek to form relationships with victims as well as with perpetrators. Once these relationships have been established, the goal is to bring victims and perpetrators directly together, in guided and regular encounters. Throughout the process, Christian values such as forgiveness, healing, transformation and love are emphasized. This group furthermore conducts seminars on conflict awareness as well as on handling traumatic situations, especially prior to the genocide memorial week in April. In addition to offering weekly meetings with the "lights" and seminars on trauma and healing, the EPR supports the reconciliation process between survivors and perpetrators through developmental projects. The EPR supplies, for

---

8 Research and documentation is facilitated through, for instance, access to a theological library, to computers and the internet.

instance, micro-loans in order for survivors and perpetrators to engage in small communal corporations such as the growing and selling of tree saplings. This not only enhances the sustainability of the reconciliation process but at the same time provides much needed income opportunities in particular for the survivors, often widows with few social and financial means. As previously discussed, EPR views reconciliation and development to be inseparably related.

(3) Institutional and parish level: activities linked to reconciliation and remembrance. Any thought of reconciliation is preceded by the thought of the injustice suffered. Reconciliation connects looking back into a painful past with looking forward into a hopeful future. The crucial link between reconciliation and remembrance is recognized in Rwanda by both the government and the churches. Both work closely together, for instance, in the joint preparation of the annual genocide commemoration week each April. In addition, the EPR has its own commemoration projects in different parishes that include memorials with the inscribed names of their pastors and members that were killed[9] as well as ritualized commemoration ceremonies including prayer, sermons and worship. Through the vehicles of prayer or worship, traumatized people may find ways of expressing their emotions of pain, anger or fear in a societal context where the public expression of negative feelings is usually restricted. Knowing that their own sufferings as well as that of their loved ones are not forgotten, neither by God nor by their fellow humans, helps survivors live in the present. By their official recognition, their suffering is acknowledged and accorded a legitimate place in the church and in society at large.

While the Rwandan churches—as exemplified by the EPR—engage in multifaceted and extensive efforts in reconciliation and peacebuilding, certain problematic areas can be identified as well. One of them relates to the connection between reconciliation and justice. In this regard, John Paul Lederach's concept of reconciliation is helpful. Lederach understands reconciliation as four-dimensional, namely as the combination of peace, justice, mercy and truth (Lederach 1999). Genuine reconciliation must pay attention to all four elements. As for the Rwandan churches, one notices a major emphasis on peace and mercy, yet less attention is being given to justice and truth. This observation is shared by Josephine Sundqvist who remarks in her study of the Pentecostal Movement and its implications on the reconciliation process "that the Pentecostal movement has barely been

---

9   The Presbyterian Church lost 41 (i.e. more than half) of its pastors, elders and deacons and a large number of its members in the genocide.

emphasizing justice in their reconciliation strategy or their interpretation of the concept" (Sundqvist 2011: 169). However, concerns of justice seem of particular importance in a context marked by the domination of "all levels of socio-political life" (Thomson 2015: 324) by the government and its ruling party.

To sum up, reconciliation and peacebuilding have emerged as central to the self-understanding of the EPR as they are closely linked to the EPR's vision of evangelization and development.[10] The EPR engages in a variety of peacebuilding initiatives, of which three were discussed: theological training, activities linking reconciliation and development, and activities linking reconciliation and remembrance. Within all these activities, the Christian faith is clearly visible. Christian values such as forgiveness, peace and healing serve as both motivation and orientation. On the other hand, concerns of justice and truth appear rather neglected by the churches.

3.2 Religious and Non-Religious Peacebuilding

Based on the case study of the EPR and its reconciliation and peacebuilding activities, the focus of this paper now shifts to the following questions: are there any differences between faith-based and non-faith-based peace-makers? Are there any specific competences that can be attributed to the former? Any specific resources that cannot be tapped by the latter? I will first discuss a number of formal characteristics of religious peacemakers, followed by content-based characteristics.[11]

Formal characteristics: Comparing religious and non-religious peacebuilding, R. Scott Appleby points first and foremost to the relationship component that makes religious leaders particularly well equipped for engaging in peacemaking endeavors by building constructive relationships to and between different ethnic and religious groups (Appleby 2006). Their com-

---

10 The EPR describes its vision under the perspective of evangelization and development, "firstly to evangelize by proclaiming the love and salvation offered by God through his son Jesus Christ … and secondly to manifest the love of God through the concrete actions of human and social development". Église presbytérienne au Rwanda (EPR). Vision and Mission (http://www.epr.rw/index.php/en/about-us/vision-and-mission, last accessed, 1 February 2018).

11 Formal characteristics such as neutrality or competences in relationship building are markers that are not dependent on a specific religion. Content-based characteristics, on the other hand, refer to features of a certain religion, for instance, the concepts of forgiveness or reconciliation in the Christian tradition. At times, however, the borderline between formal and content-based characteristics can be fluid.

petence in relationship building is enhanced by the fact that religious actors tend to enjoy moral authority and credibility. They are perceived as "neutral", i.e. as not pursuing their own personal gain or that of a certain group but being committed only to peace. These characteristics of religious peacemakers correlate to the four areas of how religious actors can positively contribute to conflict resolution that Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana and Abu-Nimer identify: (1) "Emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities;" (2) effective mobilization for "their communities and others for peace;" (3) mediation "between conflicting parties" and (4) encouraging "reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration" (Bouta *et al*. 2005; Haynes 2007: 69).

Content-based characteristics: The Christian religion, for instance, with its emphasis on love, forgiveness and reconciliation offers powerful and constructive resources for the transformation even of deep conflicts. Through different tools such as sermons, worship or prayer, religious actors, both as individuals and communities, engage in a holistic effort aimed at transforming the entire person, including habits and relationships. Bataringaya points out: "It [i.e. reconciliation] is not easier when you are a Christian. But: Christians have the word of God. This is a big help. The pastor and the church can play a great role in healing. It is better if you have the word of God. This is hope."[12] While churches such as the EPR also include tools and methods of secular conflict transformation work, for instance,psycho-social therapy or trauma counselling, Bataringaya describes the abiding difference between religious and secular peacebuilding: "The power by the word of God that the church possesses. The churches have something special. They walk with the people, with the perpetrators, with the victims. People feel that they are not alone. ."[13] Religious actors can therefore reach a deep and existential level that is seldom attained in secular conflict resolution programs.

Due to its focus on holistic transformation, religion furthermore bestows a sense of empowerment. The religious actor sees his or her own individual peacebuilding action as part of a larger purpose. In complex conflict situations where progress is not readily visible oftentimes, this framework provides much needed encouragement. Marc Gopin calls these indi-

---

12 Interview with Pascal Bataringaya, 21 February 2016.
13 Interview with Pascal Bataringaya, 21 February 2016.

vidual steps "positive increments of change" (PICs),[14] i.e. first-order goals that are significant for peacebuilding in and of themselves. They may eventually lead up to higher-order goals such as paradigm shifts for sustainable peace or they may not. In either case, these increments should be looked upon as success. They gain even more meaning when viewed from a spiritual perspective. "The sacralization of the PIC can be emotionally transformative and more sustainable" (Gopin 2009: 76).

4. Conclusion

Does religion make a difference in peacebuilding? Are there any specific capacities and competences that religious actors can resort to in this field? If so, what are these? This contribution investigated possible answers to these questions in two parts. First, the term "religious" violence was revealed as problematic due to a continuing lack of definition of the term "religion". Furthermore, religion's inherent ambivalence was pointed out.[15] While religion certainly does possess conflict enhancing traits, as much of current opinions emphasize, it also incorporates significant and underestimated resources for conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

The second and main part was concerned with the resources and productivity that religion itself can bring to peacebuilding. Utilizing a case study of religious peacebuilding in post-genocide Rwanda, this part traced reconciliation activities of the local Presbyterian church. Compared to non-religious peacebuilding actors such as the Rwandan government, the following aspects emerged.

---

14 "The key criterion of evaluation is that the effect of the increment is transformative, meaning that it profoundly changes the attitude and approach *of at least some people* toward peace and away from destructive forms of conflict. That is all it need do to qualify as a PIC. At the end of the day, it does not matter *how many* people have been transformed but that this increment is inherently transformative" (Gopin 2009: 68).

15 This ambiguity in terms of FBOs is pointed out by Ware *et al*.: "FBOs have mixed roles in relation to conflict and peacebuilding. Some authors propose that while religious difference is often at the centre of conflicts, with religious organisations often involved, the same organisations are also vital to peacebuilding. (…) In other words, they can draw on behavioural expectations like peace-oriented teachings, or repentance for furthering reconciliation, and use negotiation between denominational or inter-faith organisations to bring people together for dialogue in ways secular NGOs may not be able" (Ware *et al*. 2016: 328). On religious communities as peacemakers, cf. Kelleher and Johnson 2008: 160.

First, the Christian message of forgiveness, grace, transformation and healing is utilized in the training of pastors and church staff. It provides helpful resources as the pastors deliver the message and their normative implications in their parishes. In weekly sermons, regular group activities such as youth groups, bible study groups or women's groups as well as through worship the message of peace and forgiveness is spread.

Connected to the first is a *second* aspect that is related to cultural norms. In Rwandan society, public expressions of pain such as crying is not a socially acceptable behaviour. The sphere of religion, however, constitutes an exception to this rule. During church services, through the channels of song and dance, traumatized survivors can express their emotions, a first step towards inner healing.

Third, churches like the EPR utilize a mixed approach to reconciliation. While they bring to bear their own specific Christian resources, they also include helpful secular strategies from mediation, conflict resolution or trauma therapy. By offering seminars in the familiar context of the church setting in the home village, possible psychological barriers are lowered to participate.

Fourth, by "walking with the people" (Bataringaya) the church offers an approach that is built on long-term relationships, trust and community. Survivors in particular, often socially, spiritually and materially weakened, profit from the relational and existential emphasis.

Fifth, the EPR displays a "holistic" approach to reconciliation. Reconciliation is not only preached from the pulpit, but practical and material help is provided as well. Linking reconciliation projects and development projects such as through shared corporations seem to enhance the sustainability of both.

While the link between violence and terrorism on the one side and religion on the other is easily made these days, it was the aim of this contribution to shed some light on the less noticed connection between religion and peacebuilding. As Heist and Cnaan (2016:13) conclude, "There are many ways by which people can actualize their faith. Hatred and terrorism is one way; serving people in need is another way. In the context of international social and economic development, the faith-based organizations are countering the impact of extremist groups".

References

Appleby, R. Scott, "Building Sustainable Peace. The Roles of Local and Transnational Religious Actors." Paper presented at the conference on "*The New Religious Pluralism in World Politics*," Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 16–17 March 2006.

Bouta, Tsjeard, Kadayifci-Orellana Ayse S. and Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, *Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim, and Faith-Based Actors*, The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2005.

Cavanaugh, W.T. "Sins of Omission: What "Religion and Violence" Arguments Ignore." *The Hedgehow Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture* 6(1), 2004: 34–50 [http://works.bepress.com/william_cavanaugh/32].

De Waal, Alex, "Armed Conflict and the Challenge of Hunger: Is an End in Sight?", in *2015 Global Hunger Index,* edited by Welthungerhilfe et al. Bonn/Washington, DC/ Dublin, 2015: 22–29 [http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/en/globalhungerindex2015.html].

Detmold Confession [http://www.rwandahope.com/confession.pdf].

Église Presbytérienne au Rwanda (EPR), *Historical Background* [http://cfd.epr.rw/index.php/en/cfdhome/historical-background].

Enns, Fernando, "Transformative Gerechtigkeit als Möglichkeitsraum zur Versöhnung." *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 26(1), 2013: 23–35.

Fitzgerald, Timothy, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Frazer, Owen and Friedli, Richard, *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation: Concepts, Cases and Practical Implications*, Zurich: ETH Zurich Center for Security Studies, 2015.

Friedli, Richard, "Der ethnopolitische Konflikt in Rwanda", in *Die Bedeutung des Ethnischen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung. Einbindungen. Ausgrenzungen. Säuberungen*, edited by Moser, R. Bern: Paul Haupt, 2000: 133–149.

Friese, Sebastian, *Politik der gesellschaftlichen Versöhnung. Eine theologisch-ethische Untersuchung am Beispiel der Gacaca-Gerichte in Ruanda*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010.

Gopin, Marc, *To Make the Earth Whole. The Art of Citizen Diplomacy in an Age of Religious Militancy*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

Granovetter, Mark S., "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(1), 1973: 1360–1380.

Haynes, Jeffrey, *Religion and Development. Conflict or Cooperation?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Kelleher, Ann and Johnson, Megan, "Religious Communities as Peacemakers: A Comparison of Grassroots Peace processes in Sudan and Northern Ireland." *Civil Wars* 10(2), 2008: 148–172.

Kimball, Charles, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, San Francisco: Harper, 2002.

Lederach, John Paul, "Justpeace", in *European Centre for Conflict Prevention*, *People Building Peace*. Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999: 27–36.

Lincoln, Bruce, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Morozzo della Rocca, Roberto, *Making Peace. The Role Played by the Community of Sant'Egidio in the International Arena*, London: New City, 2013.

National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, *Fourth Population and Housing Census*, 2012. [http://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/rphc4-thematic-report-socio-cultural-characteristics-population].

Peetz, Katharina, "Das Schuldbekenntnis von Detmold und sein Stellenwert im ruandischen Versöhnungsprozess", in *Schuld als Herausforderung für Theologie und Kirche*, edited by Enxing, Julia. Ostfildern: Grünewald, 2015: 249–261.

Reporters Without Borders, World Press Freedom Index, 2016 [https://rsf.org/en/ranking].

Smith, Jonathan Z., *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Sundqvist, Joseph, "Reconciliation as a Societal Process. A Case Study on the Role of the Pentecostal Movement (ADEPR) as an Actor in the Reconciliation Process in Post-genocide Rwanda." *Swedish Missiological Themes* 99(2), 2011: 157–195.

Thomson, S., "Rwanda" in *Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2014*, Vol. 11, edited by Elischer, Sebastian (et. al.). Leiden: Brill, 2015: 323–334.

United Nations, We Can End Poverty [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/poverty.shtml].

Van de Loo, Stephanie, *Versöhnungsarbeit. Kriterien theologischer Rahmen Praxisperspektiven*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009.

Vosloo, Robert, "Reconciliation as the Embodiment of Memory and Hope." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 109(1), 2001: 25–40.

Waardenburg, Jaques, *Religionen und Religion. Systematische Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986: 250–255.

Ware, Vicki-Ann, Ware, Anthony and Clarke, Matthew, "Domains of Faith Impact: How "Faith" is Perceived to Shape Faith-based International Development Organisations." *Development in Practice* 26(3), 2016: 321–33.

Wilson, Brian C., "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion", in *What Is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*, edited by Idinopulos, Thomas A. and Wilson, Brian C. Leiden: Brill, 1998: 141–162.