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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
BETHEL SEMINARY ST. PAUL

A PETITION FOR GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN GAMBELLA, ETHIOPIA

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND FAMILY CARE

BY
OMOT OLOK AGANYA
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 2015

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It is characteristic of anyone with sense to express gratitude and indebtedness to any and all who have assisted in the writing of a thesis project. In my case this is an almost impossible task because I have been blessed along the way with numerous conversation partners and readers of various drafts of this paper. Even so, some have borne more than their share of the burdens of my puzzlement as well as my struggle to make a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia. Before I mention their names, I must first give the Triune God glory and adoration and praise, and my thanks go to Dr. Justin Irving, who approved my proposal to write a paper on this theme. I am so grateful to my dear friend Mark Nygaard for reading and editing and looking for all the grammatical errors and style and technical problems. My grateful thanks go to my dear advisor Dr. Herbert Klem for bearing with me throughout this project. He read each chapter, engaged with me in discussion about the form, style, grammar, content, and everything about this paper, including the substance of its arguments, and offered both challenges and support at crucial moments. I give thanks to my emotionally intelligent spiritual leader, Dr. Jeanine Parolini, whose class helped me with my emotional struggles and who accepted my request to be my second reader. Finally, I give my wife a lot of thanks for her unending support. Thank you Hanna for your prayers, time, typing, and everything.

PREFACE

The main reason why the researcher decided to undertake this thesis project on the theme of a Petition for God's Forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia was because he is currently a missionary to Ethiopia. He has been ministering to the various ethnic communities in the region of Gambella. This project has raised his awareness of the importance of finding a solution to the ethnic upheaval and hatred that has been going on among the ethnic groups in Gambella.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Nehemiah heard sad news about the ruin of the wall of Jerusalem and the destitute lives of the Israelites. He wrote, “

They said to me, ‘those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in a great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.’ When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days, I mourned and fasted and prayed before the Lord God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:3-4 NIV).

The researcher heard his heartbreaking news on the morning of Saturday, December 14, 2003, when a cousin of his wife called them from Minnesota at 7:15 to tell them that his father-in-law had been murdered in Gambella. This thesis paper was born that day. They received many phone calls from all over the world, wherever Anyuwaa people lived. They heard that during the three days of December 14-17, over 400 educated Anyuwaa men were killed by Ethiopian highlander military and civilians who lived in Gambella.

When the researcher heard this news, his heart broke. He could not hold in his emotion. As Jesus Christ wept for His beloved friend Lazarus (John 11:35), the

researcher wept and cried sorrowfully with his wife for her father and the other Anyuwaa people. It was a sad day that they would never forget. But since they were believers, they ran to Jesus Christ who said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God and trust also in me” (John 14:1 NIV). They decided to kneel down before God and pray in Jesus’ name. They prayed for the researcher’s mother-in-law and her four children who were in Ethiopia when their father was murdered.

In *The Grace of Yes: Eight Virtues for Generous Living*, Lisa M. Hendey writes:

Pain is real and stories of loss seem to enshroud us every day of the week. It is hard to reconcile the horrific tragedies that occur in this world with love of an all-powerful God. Whether loss stems from destruction brought on by human activity or from natural devastation, great loss, shakes us up. As much as we hate the moments of pain and grief, we are drawn to the images of unselfish love one’s neighbor. They motivate us to be a part of solution, even if only in some small, modest way. We mourn, even as we get busy binding up and comforting others.¹

This was true for the researcher and his wife. After they knew that their father was killed in Gambella with other Anyuwaa men, they did not only pray for their relatives anymore, but began to pray for the killers too. And the thought of writing a paper on a petition for God’s forgiveness germinated then.

On February 4, 2004, while the researcher was praying deeply for his people in Gambella, God the Holy Spirit led him to read from Lamentations 3:25-27:

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust there may yet be hope (NIV).

The researcher and his wife sat in silence before God and prayed. This research was born at that time of prayer.

¹Lisa M. Hendey, *The Grace of Yes: Eight Virtues for Generous Living* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014), 56.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GPLM	Gambella People's Liberation Movement
GPNRS	Gambella People's National Regional State
GPUDP	Gambella People's United Democratic Party
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
UNDM	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

DEFINITIONS

Abyssinia: The historical name of Ethiopia.

Anyuwaa: Different writers spell the name of this people differently: Anyuak, Anuak and Agnwak. However, the people call themselves Anyuwaa, the designation that the researcher prefers to use in this project.

Border People: The people living near or on a border between two or more countries. For example, Gambella is on the border between Ethiopia and Southern Sudan. So the tribes or ethnic groups who live on the border between these countries are called border people.

Communism: A political theory derived from Karl Marx advocating class warfare and leading to a society in which most property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to his or her abilities and needs.

Communitarianism: A theory or system of social organization based on small self-governing communities; an ideology that emphasizes the responsibility of the individual to the community and the social importance of the family unit or communal societies. These are found in many traditional cultures around the world. They have little to do with communism, but have much to do with how people work, produce, distribute, and share their possessions.

Control: Influence or direction of people social organization based on small self-governing communities; an ideology that emphasizes, or phenomenon; power to restrain something, especially one's own emotional behavior or action.

Ethnic groups: Groups most commonly defined within pluralistic societies, such as the United States of America where there are Italian-Americans, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Jewish-Americans, and others. Many of these ethnically diverse groups that have lived in North America for numerous generations are no more culturally Asian, African, Jewish, or German than their neighbors. Ethnic groups are commonly used to distinguish slightly different groups, all of whom share a basic common culture, from the multitude of other groups within a pluralistic society. Ethnic groups may be composed of individuals who are physically, religiously, linguistically, or traditionally different. The groups use these differences to distinguish themselves from others in the society, yet ethnic groups are not distinct, separate cultures, but parts of a larger heterogeneous society. The United States of America's ethnic groups are mostly from other nations. In Africa, these ethnic groups are in one nation but have distinct ethnicity and usually languages. In the Bible, the Greek word *ethnos* means a people, tribe, or descent group that usually has a common language, but this term is usually translated in English as "nation." In 20th century usage, a nation is a large political group, with borders, currency, a government and an army. The problem is that most nations in Europe were composed of many tribes that were assimilated into one language group. Parts of central Europe is full of threats of civil wars, but most nations in Europe are now unified. The agony of Africa is that many nations are composed of many conflicting ethnic or tribal groups.

Ethnocentrism: A way of evaluating other peoples and cultures according to the standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentric character is based on the attitude that one's own group is the best or superior. Having the idea that your own group or culture is better than or more important than others shows complete ignorance of how other worldviews work.

Gambella: Stands for three things – the region of Gambella, the district of Gambella, and the town of Gambella.

Highlanders: In this paper, this refers to the people who came to Gambella from different parts of the northern highland of Ethiopia, who may speak Amharic, Oromiffa, or other languages from outside the region of Gambella.

Identity Crisis: A period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person from parts of the north comes insecure, typically due to a sense of failure or dissatisfaction in their accomplishments or role in society, and usually in comparison to other threatening or dominant groups

Identity Politics: The tendency for people of a particular religion, race, and social background to endeavor to form exclusive political alliances, moving away from traditional broad-based party politics.

Poverty: State of being extremely poor; the state of being inferior in quality or insufficient in amount; the renunciation of the right to individual ownership of property as part of a religious vow.

Tribe: A social division of a people of common descent, united by ties of descent from a common ancestor, with common culture, customs, traditions, and adherence to the same leaders while living and sharing ideas, language, country, and religion together.

Villagization: A process instigated by the Ethiopian government to relocate rural population into concentrated, permanent settlements. The villagers were agro-pastoralists and practiced shifting cultivation. In Gambella, reportedly, once the people had been moved, the land could be made available for development of commercial agriculture.

ABSTRACT

This thesis project explored the root causes of the ethnic conflicts in the Gambella region of Ethiopia. It examined the issues of ethnic, social, political, and historical conflict occurring at the regional level, which are vital to comprehensively understanding the nature and outcome of the local conflicts. These are embedded in geopolitics, the politics of established administrative agencies established in Gambella by different empires and governments, militarization, ethnicity, socio-economics, deprivation, inequality, marginalization, discrimination, racism, and the undemocratic institutions of the region, as well as the absence of effective mechanisms for national and sub-regional dispute resolution. The lack of implementation and application of a true democratic administration in the region causes painful grievances in the hearts of the indigenous people of Gambella. These grievances germinated in their hearts during the incorporation of the Gambella region into the Ethiopian state at the end of the twentieth century, when new categories of people, largely of Amhara and Oromo origin (Ethiopian highlanders), were introduced.

Since then, there has been a history of conflict, civil wars, authoritarian rule, the exclusion of minorities from government, socio-economic inequality, and weakness of the Ethiopian government, which has not been able to manage normal societal conflict in a stable and consensual way. These conditions create a security vacuum that the ethnic

groups and individuals seek to fill through the use of violence, sometimes in an organized and sustained manner, and at other times a spontaneous and sporadic manner.

All these problems and conflicts among ethnic groups of Gambella have been detrimental for centuries, yet the central government of Ethiopia, knowingly or not, has failed to thoroughly investigate, study and research the root causes of the problematic Gambella conflict.

The researcher found many documents on this conflict. It is clear to him that much research has been done by Ethiopian highlander scholars and some students from the indigenous ethnic groups in Gambella. But he has not seen any research on a solution to the conflict in Gambella and the causes of indigenous grievances.

The researcher has done a comprehensive exploratory study that provides data crucial to tackling issues of forgiveness, non-forgiveness, revenge, anger, and the possibility of reconciliation and restoration of peace in Gambella. The findings in this study are highly relevant for any intended assessment of the correlation of different ethnic groups' emotional grievances according to the degree of the hurt, pain and agony in their hearts.

DEDICATION

This thesis project is dedicated to Reverend Pastor Okwier Oletho Okwier and his immediate family, to the innocent Anyuwaa victims of violence murdered on December 13, 2003 in Gambella, Ethiopia, to their dear children left behind and living with the trauma of hearts wounded by death, to the Anyuwaa widows whose husbands were murdered, and to all Anyuwaa people who have been grieving for their loved ones since December 13, 2003.

Even though the Anyuwaa people forgive those who murdered you, they will never forget you in Gambella. They will love you forever. May your souls rest in the hands of God, our creator and righteous judge! The Anyuwaa people will remember you as long as they and their children live in Gambella and the world. Sometimes people think that forgiveness means you have to forget. The motto is, “You have to forgive and forget.” No, you forgive but still remember, because you are mentally reliving the event. The Anyuwaa people will never stop missing and loving you dearly!

Reverend Okwier Oletho Okwier, the Anyuwaa Christians thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ, His Gospel, and His people, whom you served tirelessly for over three decades. As the blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground, pleading for justice, they believe your blood is crying out to God, interceding for justice to be done in Gambella, Ethiopia. As King David once said, “How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the

Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Psalms 116:12-15 NIV). Pastor Okwier, you have done it! You denied yourself for the sake of the gospel of your Lord Jesus Christ and you have fulfilled His commission in Gambella, Ethiopia, where the Lord called you to serve Him and His people. You were a great servant leader. Well done faithful servant of the highest Lord of lords and King of kings.

The researcher has dedicated this thesis project to you, dear father-in-law, because it was your plan for him to study theology and come back to Gambella, Ethiopia to serve the Lord and His people with you. As you followed the footsteps of your Lord Jesus Christ, your mentor, and His gospel, your daughter Hanna and the researcher will follow you. Your families know that you would forgive your enemies. They too have forgiven the people who murdered you on December 13, 2003. Your family misses you, but will join you in heaven to live with you and your Lord Jesus Christ forever in His kingdom of love and light.

EPIGRAPH

Finally, all of you, be like minded, be sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do well; they must seek peace and pursue it; for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil (1 Peter 3:8-12 NIV).

Forgiveness is a blessing, but millions of dead people have shown us their preference to die rather than forgive. We might logically conclude that forgiveness of great crime is nearly impossible, especially if the best of our lives have been ruined by what someone else has done. But forgiveness is never impossible. Never! If we manage it, we are the ones who benefit most. Forgiveness frees us from pain in our hearts. When we forgive, we free ourselves from manacles forged in our mind. We start to derive benefits as soon as we gain release from the anger and resentments that have held us down.² So, forgiveness is a gift that we give to others for our own advantage.

Remember that when Jesus Christ stretched out His arms on the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:24 NIV).

² Edward M. Hallowell, MD, *Dare to Forgive: The Power of Letting Go and Moving On* (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2004), 5-7.

INTRODUCTION

The researcher has written this thesis project as a petition to God and to his people in Gambella, Ethiopia. A petition can be defined as “A formal request addressed to a higher power; a request made for something desired, especially a respectful or humble request, as to a superior or to one of those in authority; a supplication or prayer, soliciting some favor, right, mercy, or other benefits; or a formal written request, typically one signed by many people, appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause.”³ A petition is a written application from a person or persons to some governing body or public official asking that some authority be exercised to grant relief, liberty, favor, and more. The researcher has written this thesis as a petition for God’s forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia, seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness to be extended to people of all ethnicities there. This petition is based on God’s word in 2 Chronicles 7:14, which says, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (NIV). The researcher prays, “Lord, heal the hearts of the people of Gambella and their land.”

The ethnic groups and individual people who live in Gambella need God’s forgiveness, grace, and reconciliation in order to live together peacefully. Without them, the unsettled rage of anger and hostility that is vividly active in their hearts, and the

³ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009), 30.

animosity that has caused them to kill each other in the past and present, will keep them repeating the cycle of tribal hatred toward each other.

The author of this thesis is making an appeal to his people in Gambella, asking them to forgive each other, not to hold on to grudges, bitterness, and resentment; he asks them to not seek revenge. “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord’” (Romans 12:19 NIV).

The author encourages his people to approach the sovereign God and make an appeal to Him for His forgiveness. “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrew 4:16 NIV).

The researcher knows that his people are in a desperate time of need right now. They need God’s mercy, grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They need the love and peace of God in their hearts and in their region.

Queen Esther was in a position to make a petition to her husband, King Xerxes, when Haman, an enemy of the Jews asked the king to issue a decree to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews (Esther 3:13 NIV).

When Mordecai learned of all that Haman had been planned; he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. In every province to which the edict of the king, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sack clothes and ashes. Mordecai persuaded Esther to help her people-the Jews (Esther 4:1, 3 NIV).

So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king’s presence to beg for

mercy and plead with him for her people (Esther 4:6-8 NIV). Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go and gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, and night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:15-17 NIV).

Queen Esther went to the king and begged him to rescue her people, and the king listened to her petition and saved the Jews. The researcher knows that many educated Anyuwaa men were killed in the town of Gambella on December 13, 2003, and there were Anyuwaa people working in the governing body in Gambella when these killings were planned. Unfortunately, there were no persons who urged the Anyuwaa people to pray and fast like Mordecai and Esther. But now the researcher wants to devote himself to praying for the people of Gambella.

Even though many educated Anyuwaas were massacred in Gambella in December 2003, the researcher encourages his people to cry to God. Since December 13, 2003, his people have been crying to the international community, the United Nations, and the government of Ethiopia, but their crying has been sounding like a “resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1 NIV). Now, they assume that nobody loves them, as the Ethiopian government thinks. They are good for nothing except their fertile land.

So the researcher has found the factors that caused the Anyuwaa people to be killed. These factors are not new, but as old as the fertile land of Gambella: the minerals, oil, gold, rivers, and natural resources that the colonial powers and the past and present regimes of Ethiopia have desired for themselves without the knowledge, consultation, or permission of the ignorant indigenous people of Gambella.

The researcher urges the indigenous people of Gambella to ask God to forgive them and heal their land, for God to bring peace and prosperity there. Readers of this

thesis project have an opportunity to learn what the researcher has learned and written about the tragedy and atrocities that the people of Gambella have faced in the past and continue to face in the present.

CHAPTER ONE:
A PETITION FOR GOD'S FORGIVENESS IN GAMBELLA, ETHIOPIA

The Problem and Its Context

The problem this project addresses is the unresolved anger and hostility that is vigorously active in the hearts of individuals and ethnic communities in Gambella, Ethiopia. This animosity has caused them to kill each other in the past and present, and has kept them repeating the cycle of tribal hatred toward each other.

In response to this problem, the researcher has looked deeply into the tribes' backgrounds and found the core roots of the tribal hostility that has simmered among ethnic groups in Gambella for years. He has found pathways toward forgiveness by learning from what has happened in Rwanda and among other ethnic groups. He has found a solid possibility for resolution and breaking the cycle of animosity. He has found fundamental ways and means, or methods, that would reduce retaliation or a vindictive spirit. And he has looked into biblical and practical resources regarding forgiveness and reconciliation.

Delimitation of the Problem

This research is limited to the Gambella region of Ethiopia. Even though there are also many other tribes and ethnic groups in Ethiopia struggling with their own conflicts, this research has been limited to the tribal conflict among ethnic groups in Gambella. The research explores the relationships among the five indigenous tribes and the highlanders

who live with them. The researcher has explored the background of the ethnic groups in Gambella, in the past and today, in order to understand what has gone wrong with them. Why were they or are they killing each another? Why do some tribes want to get rid of other tribes? Why do they not treat other tribes as their own? What do they not know about hatred and killing one another?

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the resolution to the tribal hatred among the ethnic groups in Gambella, Ethiopia are forgiveness, the unconditional love of God, the mercy and grace of God, reconciliation to each other, and the restoration of a stable community of diverse tribes and ethnicities. The Anyuwaa people need to forgive the highlanders and other tribes who killed their loved ones.

The second assumption is that all tribes of Gambella must pursue peacemaking with other ethnic groups. Even though the Anyuwaa are the first tribe who came to reside in Gambella, they are not living there alone anymore. The Anyuwaa people need to embrace other ethnic groups and let them live with them in peace and harmony. It is appropriate for everyone to get involved in, understand, and appreciate the economic and demographic forces that have brought these people into this area and led to the conflicts that are present.

The third assumption is that the researcher hopes to see good governance in Gambella. He hopes to see all the tribes of Gambella working together in peace of mind and unity for the common good of developing the state of Gambella. He hopes to see them succeed in their good leadership and in smooth communication between Gambella and the central government of Ethiopia in the capital city, Addis Ababa. He hopes to see

understanding and healthy political stability among the indigenous tribes of Gambella and the highlanders who live with them.

The fourth assumption is that the researcher would like to see all the tribes of Gambella living and working together for their common good and for the benefit of their children and future generations of the people of Gambella without a sense of antagonism.

The fifth assumption is that Ethiopia is known for its people dying from famine and hunger. If all tribes of Gambella unite and work harder for the sake of Gambella and Ethiopia, and if they do not favor identity politics, they would make a great deal of agricultural investment that could feed the whole country of Ethiopia and all of Africa.

The sixth assumption is that the state of Gambella has very fertile land. If the politicians give up their unhealthy politics of greed and begin looking for their potential talents, knowledge, skills, abilities, wisdom, and giftedness, they would really bless the whole country of Ethiopia from Gambella's resources.

The seventh assumption is that the leaders in the administrative offices in Gambella need help. They need well-seasoned political advisers. They need political experts who know what true democracy is and what it could mean to them and the country of Ethiopia. They need visionary political leaders. They need entrepreneurs and well-seasoned political fathers who can guide them in the spirit of forgiveness, love, equality, peace, unity, and freedom.

The eighth assumption is that developing the state of Gambella should be the primary plan and goal that all tribes living in Gambella need to consider. As they take action to forgive one another, they will see their vision, passion, and pursuit of prosperity as their priority together, which will help them to have a good administrative effort for

the common good of their state. People of Gambella should know that working together as a team for one purpose, vision and goal is the key to solving their problems and helping all tribes in their state to achieve and enjoy the benefits of the better state that they desire for themselves and future generations. Unity is the master key to open all the doors of opportunity for stability, peace, and prosperity in Gambella, Ethiopia.

Sub-problems

The first sub-problem is to find the core roots of the tribal hatred and hostility that has been simmering among the ethnic groups of Gambella for years. The researcher has found documentation of the history and causes of the migration of some groups to Gambella from other places. It is vital to learn how local and central leaders have not understood these issues. The researcher has found much evidence that indicates which positions are right or wrong, of which God is the true judge! He has reviewed all the sources he could find, including oral history, pictures, documents, and narratives, as he has sought to discover accurate sources for this project.

The second sub-problem is to find pathways toward forgiveness by learning from what has happened in Rwanda and among other ethnics groups. The researcher has found many documents on this issue.

The third sub-problem is to find a solid potential resolution for breaking the cycle of animosity. The researcher has done pastoral care work on this chaotic life circle.

The fourth sub-problem is to discover foundations for a method that would prevent retaliation and take on the vindictive spirit of non-forgiveness. The researcher has assessed what has worked in other places, and how it would work in Gambella.

The fifth sub-problem is to answer this question: “Are unforgiving hearts and spirits the reason why ethnic churches of Gambella are not reaching out to other ethnic churches?” To answer this question, the researcher has looked into biblical and practical resources regarding forgiveness and reconciliation, the peace and oneness of the church of Jesus Christ.

Setting of the Project

The researcher has focused on Gambella and the tribes or ethnic groups that have been living there. He has touched on the history of the indigenous tribes who came to live there before other tribes came.

Before the highland and southern tribes of Ethiopia came to Gambella, it was the region of five indigenous tribes: the Anyuwaa, Majanger, Kumo, Opuo and Nuer. Even though these five indigenous tribes claim Gambella as their territory, the Anyuwaa and Nuer have never gotten along with each other as they have tried to live together. Since the Nuer tribe came to Gambella, they have been fighting with the Anyuwaa people over land, water, grass, properties, ownership, leadership, and political power.

In the 1900s, other nationalities started coming to Gambella, including Sudanese, Arabian, and English, Italian, and American missionaries. Since the Anyuwaa tribe was the ethnic group living in Gambella before other tribes moved in, they have been claiming Gambella as their own land. Because of this claim, they have been trying to resist any tribe, government, and people who wanted to take over their land. Because the Anyuwaa had a social structure in the form of a government led by kings (*Nyeye*) and land chiefs, (*kuweri*), they resisted any government or people who wanted to destroy this system.

As stated above, the Nuer tribe has wanted to take over the leadership and land of the Anyuwaa for centuries. The Anyuwaa and Nuer tribes have been fighting severely because the Nuers have been aggressively perusing Anyuwaa land. Even though the Anyuwaa people have unwillingly given up a lot of land to the Nuer people, the Nuer never give the Anyuwaa rest because they want all the land of the Anyuwaa. The Nuer and Anyuwaa are border people living on the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia. Some of them are Sudanese and some are Ethiopian.

Importance of the Project

Importance of the Project to the Researcher

The researcher sees himself as a peacemaker. He will give himself no rest until all ethnic groups of Gambella taste the true life of peace in unity and love one another as good citizens of one beloved country, Ethiopia.

Since 1997, the researcher has been going back and forth to Gambella to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in and beyond the churches. He wants to be a peacemaker in Gambella, opening up a road of hope and peace among the ethnic groups there. The people of Gambella are living with fear, insecurity, and conflict as a result of what happened on December 13, 2003, when many educated Anyuwaa men were massacred. The researcher wants to encourage the people of Gambella that they must not despair. Instead, they must endeavor to forgive one another and eliminate hatred from their hearts.

It was a privilege for the researcher to go to Gambella and tell people that they could find a pathway to hope and peace in their state if they open themselves to change

by forgiving. When they forgive each other, they can enter into true relationships and break down the walls of tribal hatred from their own hearts.

Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

Before the incident in Gambella on December 13, 2003, the researcher and his father-in-law ministered together. His father-in-law came to America in August 2003 and lived with him until October 24. Before his father-in-law went back to Ethiopia, they planned together that the researcher would move back to Ethiopia to work with his father-in-law. But when the researcher's father-in-law went back to Ethiopia, he was murdered on December 13, and the researcher did not know what to do after his death.

Now the researcher has gone back to Gambella, Ethiopia as a missionary. He has worked as an overseer of his father-in-law's ministry as well as doing this research. He would also like to work in the area of agricultural development, which can benefit all the communities in the state of Gambella.

According to what the researcher has discussed with his adviser, Dr. Herbert Klem, he can see that around Africa there are hundreds if not thousands of other small ethnic groups doing agriculture with very simple, traditional methods, mostly by hand, which may not feed them well or make the best possible use of the land in order to make the people wealthy, with a high rate of taxable income to help the whole country prosper. As they fail to utilize the land, the government may persecute them, or put the land under the control and use of others. This may cause rebellion, leading to hostility, conflict and all kinds of war across Africa and other parts of the world. Prosperity in the new economic conditions requires large areas of peace and economic cooperation and the power of collective bargaining in order to have efficient large-scale production or a

reasonable price for anything sold. Small, isolated region like Gambella cannot compete or survive. They are doomed to being crushed and overcome by economic powers or military force or both. The unification of Germany and now the unification of Europe and formation of the European Union in order to compete with Japan, China and the United States are historic examples of the struggle to shift from small to large-scale patterns of organization. An isolated region like Gambella is surely at risk.¹

The significance of this project is that within most African and Asian countries there are situations just like this. There are regional conflicts between African and Asian countries where there should be peace in order to make economic development possible. But human animosity is preventing any chance of recovery or regional development or prosperity. So the people suffer in poverty and cry out to God. But since they are locked in long-term hostilities (that have real historic causes – harm done in the past), there is little chance that they can repent and forgive their own people, their neighbors, and their historic adversaries in order to develop a local economic base for prosperity and productivity. The researcher has tried to document the causes of hostility, to create awareness of the larger economic realities, and to show the need for a central government, peace, and cooperation in the horn of Africa, and what it takes to have a functional regional economy.

Someone has to develop and promote a vision of regional development, and the many kinds of justice for all people that are essential for peace or development and a chance to escape the poverty that is dragging many down into evil and sin. People need to understand what it will take to save themselves from the present evil preoccupation with

¹ The researcher got the idea of large-scale development from his advisor, Dr. Herbert Klem.

ethnicity, wrongs of the past, and the divisions that allow other groups to take advantage of weak ethnic groups within a large, modern nation-state.

Ethiopia has the same problems that are common in East Africa and other parts of the world whether or not a church is present. Somalia is worse off. The preachers of the gospel need greater understanding of these population and economic forces behind what is happening in daily life around them. They are quite right about personal morality. Without morality there is little hope of development or prosperity. And local hostilities destroy the very ones who are angry and do evil to their neighbor as well as the innocent ones who are also hurt. If everyone understands and repents, there is hope. So the Gospel is the key. But those who only understand personal morality continue to leave the people in ignorance. Many churches are still in that level of ignorance.

The return of the researcher to Gambella, Ethiopia as a missionary to take over the leadership of the churches that his father-in-law planted will be a huge blessing to the hurting churches. The members of those churches will surely say, “Blessed are the feet of him who brings the good news. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to [Gambella] your God reigns” (Isaiah 52:7 NIV).

Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

In Gambella, Ethiopia, the churches and government are ethnically based entities. Even though the people of Gambella live according to their ethnic interests these days, for all intents and purposes, they used to live in peace. There was no violence or conflict, no breach of any traditional laws, yet among them laid the same tensions that spark so much conflict in villages in their state: isolation, separation, and apparent indifference to

one another. “It is human nature to protect what is precious to us behind defensive walls. We erect borders and boundaries to protect our tribes, our cultures, our families, our certitudes and our own hearts.”²

Throughout human history we see the need to create an empire based on the power of one group and the elimination of others. Today, the researcher has witnessed the quotation above active in Gambella’s churches, government, and traditional tribal paths. He thinks that this research will benefit all the denominations and churches, and the government of the state of Gambella.

The researcher wants to let the people of Gambella know that what they need is peace. Peace is getting to know each other, appreciating each other, seeing each other’s values, and receiving from each other. It flows from a communion of hearts in which we discover that we are truly brothers and sisters belonging to a common humanity. This communion of hearts is not just sentimental. It does not mean merely sheltering amidst a friendly group. It implies getting together, being committed to working for peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of love, a love that requires hard work. And it can bring pain because it implies loss of the certitudes, comforts, and even hurts that shelter and define us. “When we have been hurt deeply by a person or groups, a wound is created in us. We are angry and want vengeance,” says Jean Vanier.³

The Anyuwaa people are hurting. They are very angry at the Nuer people who have been trying to take over their land and their leadership for centuries. They wonder at Nuer aggressiveness for their land. They are complaining and murmuring at themselves

² Jean Vanier, *Finding Peace* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003), 13.

³ Vanier, 13.

and at God with questions in their hearts. They are asking why the Nuer people want to take their land while they don't want the Nuers' land. As mentioned above, Anyuwaa people were hunted down and killed by highlanders on December 13, 2003. Since then, they have been enraged toward the highlanders, whom they used to respect very much. Yet the researcher prays that forgiveness would come into the hearts of all Anyuwaa people in Gambella and all over the world.

May the Anyuwaa people take a searching look at where they have been, where they are now, and where they are going? May their focus change from awareness of a problem, to discovery of solutions, to the wholeness they can attain when solutions bring peace, to the kinds of transformation that change them in the deepest part of their lives

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL MODELS OF FORGIVENESS

Introduction

The biblical and theological chapter in this thesis project is the most important section for this topic – *a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia*. Because the researcher and those who believe in the God of the Holy Bible as the creator of the world know that this God created the universe by His powerful words out of His own love and will. He is the God of love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. He is a God who can hear, listen, speak, and answer prayers. The researcher believes that God can hear his petition for forgiveness to be extended to the people of Gambella. This God is the creator of all creatures. “He formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7 NIV). God had a godly relationship with the man He had created in the Garden of Eden. The researcher calls this a holy relationship between God and man because it was based on God's commandment and the man's obedience to it. The man, Adam, and his wife Eve broke that holy relationship when they disobeyed God's commandment, yet the loving, compassionate father God had pity on them. He forgave them even though He had given them the will and right to choose. He had wanted them to choose right, yet they chose to eat from the wrong tree. Even so, He pardoned their wrongdoing. Based on this biblical truth, the researcher believes that this loving God can forgive the people of Gambella even though they have chosen to kill each other. The human tendency to choose evil

began in the Garden of Eden where the Lord God gave the man free will and choice about eating from the fruit of the trees in the garden.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground- trees that were pleasing to the eyes and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:8-9 NIV).

Adam and Eve were enjoying life in the Garden of Eden. They were free to eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God did not want them to eat from that tree because He did not want them to die. But they disobeyed God's command. They ate from that tree and spiritual death began in that moment. They were separated from the presence of God their creator. They were disconnected from the source of their lives. "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken" (Genesis 3:23 NIV).

In Genesis 3 is an account of how sin entered the world – because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. In the garden there was a serpent craftier than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made. The serpent, empowered by Satan, seduced the woman and man into eating from the one tree that God had made off limits. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and a delight to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6 NIV). Disobedient to God's truth, Adam and Eve listened to the serpent's lies and caused shameful separation from God's presence.

The commandment that God gave to the first couple had been simple. "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil

you shall not eat for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17 NIV). It was a clear command, no complicated theology there. Obey and live, disobey and die. Adam and Eve disobeyed, so God would have been completely justified in killing them right there and then. He could have abandoned them and destroyed their eternal souls along with the serpent. But instead, the rest of Genesis 3 records God’s initiative in forgiveness and reconciliation. “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and asked him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8-9 NIV).

Although Adam and Eve had lost their way, God came searching for them. He found them feeling shameful and guilty. They did not want God to see them in that condition in which they had put themselves. They knew they had made a terrible choice that would not make God happy. Sure enough, the Lord God came to have fellowship with His special creatures as usual, but when the man and woman heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and asked, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:8-10 NIV). The Lord God knew then that His human beings had lost the way of life, but He had mercy on them and forgave them.

After explaining the temporal consequences of their actions, God also took the initiative to provide a “covering” for those actions in the form of clothing. “And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and He clothed them” (Genesis 3:21 NIV). At this point in time, Adam and Eve were wearing fig leaf garments that they had prepared immediately after becoming aware of their nakedness. “The eyes of both of

them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings” (Genesis 3:7 NIV). Hiding from the truth began there at that moment when they disobeyed the command of their God. Adam and his wife Eve began to experience the lies of the world that says, “Seeing is believing.” Ouch! Adam and Eve might have thought, “What the serpent told us was not true and our God’s word was truthful, but it is too late for us to reverse our decisions. We cannot reverse our lives back to God’s truth, but let us run and hide ourselves from the presence of the most high God.” Adam and his wife should not have run away from God their creator who loved them so much. They should have run to Him, bowed down before Him, confessed their sins, and repented for their wrongdoing. The compassionate, gracious, merciful, and faithful God would definitely have forgiven them. He is a God of forgiveness and could have forgiven their sins, but he could not leave alone the sin that had already entered their lives without dealing with it. Maybe because Adam and his wife were the only human beings then, they did not know God as a God of forgiveness. But today, people should know better that the God of the Holy Bible is a God of forgiveness. As readers or believers read through the Old Testament, they can learn about its model of forgiveness and understand why the researcher wanted to write a petition for God’s forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia. The researcher understands that forgiveness must begin with the God of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), who forgives His people in the Old Testament. So the people of Gambella should look there to find principles and models of forgiveness.

Old Testament Models of Forgiveness

To find Old Testament models of forgiveness, readers can go through the biblical characters that appeared after Adam and Eve fell and sin began to affect the hearts of men and women. In spite of the fall of humanity in the Old Testament, Bible believers can see how graciously, mercifully, compassionately, and forgivingly God dealt with His people when they missed the mark of His commandments. God punished people for the sins they committed, yet forgave and loved them. The people of Gambella must cry out to this God of mercy and forgiveness and plead to Him to grant them forgiveness, peace, love and harmony in their region because this God is the same God who forgave Cain and others, as recounted in the Old Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament, readers can recognize tangible conflicts in the accounts of various people of God: Cain versus Abel, Esau versus Jacob, Joseph versus his brothers, Jonah versus Nineveh, and others. All these people went through conflicts and violations with each other after the fall of Adam and Eve. Philip E. Friesen writes, “The simple beginning of a couple in loving and living in a garden, reproducing and spreading gardens peacefully across the globe to bring cultivation everywhere and manage the animal population. This simple plan was interrupted and turned to violence.”¹ According to the account of Adam and Eve’s children, Cain and Abel enacted the first murder. Cain murdered his brother Abel and God punished him. Cain was one of the people in the Bible who asked God to forgive him and God granted him forgiveness. Here is what these sons of Adam and Eve did:

¹ Philip E. Friesen, *The Old Testament Roots of Nonviolence* (Eugene, OR: Wipe & Stock, 2010)

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruit of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the first born of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering, he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was down cast. Then the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. Now Cain said to his brother Abel “let us go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, where is your brother Abel? I don’t know” he replied. Am I my brother’s keeper? The Lord said, “What have you done?” Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother blood from your hand, when you work the ground, it will no longer yield it crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth. (Genesis 4:2-12 NIV).

The account of Cain demonstrates that God is merciful and compassionate. He forgives those who ask Him for forgiveness. God knew that Cain killed his brother Abel, but Cain thought he could get away with his crime. God confronted him by asking him if he knew where his brother was. Feeling shame and guilt, Cain tried to hide his deed by answering that he was not his brother’s keeper. Cain pretended that he did not know what he had done to his brother and hoped God was not aware of it. But God surprised him by telling him that his brother’s blood was crying to God, pleading for justice.

As stated above, God punished Cain for killing his brother. But Cain made a petition to God:

My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and who ever finds me will kill me. But the Lord said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over. Then the Lord put mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden (Genesis 4:13-16 NIV).

God is just, fair, and merciful. He puts a mark of forgiveness on Cain. He does not leave wrongdoing unpunished. Yet, if wrongdoers go to God with a humble heart and

contrite spirit of brokenness, repent and confess their sins to Him, He is merciful and gracious and forgives sins. Cain confessed his weakness to God, and God forgave him and put a mark of forgiveness on him so that no one would do an act of revenge to him.

Surely, God would let justice rain down in Gambella whether anyone admitted wrongdoing against the Anyuwaa people or not, because God is just! God is not a human being or worldly leader who can lie. He is just, fair and truthful. He punishes wrongdoers. Whoever they are, God knows them. But if they repent and confess their sins to the God of mercy and compassion, he will forgive them. The Anyuwaa people should forgive the people who murdered their loved ones in Gambella. They need to let God deal with the wrongdoers. “If our perfect father can forgive the offense and the offender who has hurt us, who are we to withhold our forgiveness?”²

Since the Anyuwa people know that God forgives sinners if they confess their sins to him, for their part, they need to give God permission to deal with the wrongdoers according to His own authority, judgment, and power. Yes! It is hard to forgive someone whom you know murdered your loved ones, damaged your emotions, and ruined your reputation, but they can forgive those who wronged them. God wants his people to forgive those who have wronged them because He is a God of forgiveness. He knows that the Anyuwaa people can forgive their offenders by His grace, but it is up to them. They are free to choose forgiveness because forgiveness is a choice. The researcher makes a petition for God’s forgiveness to encourage the ethnic groups of Gambella to choose forgiveness over revenge, hatred, and more killing. He wants them to choose the

² Susan Wilkerson, *Getting Past Your Past: Finding Freedom From the Pain of Regret* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 121.

right way of life, which can bring peace, reconciliation, and restoration to Gambella. He does not want them to choose killing each other, as Cain chose.

In the account of Cain, God expected Cain to do what was right. God knew that Cain could master the sin that was crouching at his door and desired to have him. God knew that Cain had power over sin, the power to choose the right thing, life in Cain's case, but he failed to choose life. He chose to murder his brother. Sin defeated Cain. As Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann writes, "Sin is an aggressive force ready to ambush Cain. Sin is larger than Cain and takes on a life of its own. Sin is lethal. God's human creations must be on guard for themselves. It is a dangerous path to follow the life of Cain in how he handles his rage and depression."³ Sins can be ruled. Cain should have strived to handle sin because sin in human hearts is lusting for death. Cain needed to prevent sin from having its way but he couldn't master it. It was promised to Cain that he would conquer sin. God revealed to him that he could master it.

Cain had the choice to embrace his brother who was preferred over him, but he yielded to the rage crouching at his door. He chose his destiny. The merciful God protected him, but far from home and without the prospect of returning.

Concerning Cain and Abel, Brueggemann writes, "In the world of Cain, there is sin yearning for destructiveness that will destroy both the victims and perpetrators."⁴ It is true that the enemy of our souls is roaming about like a roaring lion looking for people of God (1 Peter 5:8). Human beings are not our enemies. The enemy is sin, which crouches at the doors of every family, community, ethnic group, tribe, society, and people in every

³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 66.

⁴ Brueggemann, 67.

country. The enemy is Satan, who wants to destroy life and God's order of families and community life. And the stakes are high in handling disorders among siblings. So people need to forgive one another whenever they fall into the fate of Cain. The ethnic groups of Gambella have been following the way of Cain, killing each other for centuries, and the researcher understands that God does not like it when people kill each other. That is why the researcher wanted to write this paper.

Another Old Testament character who experienced deceit and conflict with his brother was Esau. And to learn from the account of Esau, readers need to begin with the account of his parents, Isaac and Rebekah:

Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah. Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger (Genesis 25:20-23 NIV).

After reading this account of how God gave Isaac and Rebekah twin boys, whom He knew would have a rivalry that He may even have caused himself, the researcher thinks it is right for him to write this petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella. Why? Because God's ways and thoughts are truly different than those of human beings. In the account of Isaac and Rebekah, they asked God to give them a child and God gave them twins instead. And God knew that these brothers would have a fierce rivalry that caused them to hate each other. The researcher sees that whatever happens on this earth, God knows. He might be the cause of some conflicts, especially those among His people, because He never shares His glory with any creature. God does not exchange His glory, His words, His covenant, His promises, or His holiness with any human traditions,

theories, methods, cultural beliefs systems, or natural rights. God alone is the mighty sovereign God. He can step into the affairs of humans who do not give Him glory. He has all power, authority, and control to do whatever He wants. He is the sovereign and righteous judge and also merciful and forgiving.

The researcher recognizes God's involvement in the conflict between Esau and Jacob, but does not even want to understand or ask God why He gave Isaac and Rebekah twin brothers, or why He wanted the younger to rule over the older. The researcher believes that God knew the law of primogeniture. Why did He want to break it? God is sovereign. He is the creator. He has His own agenda, authority, power, and plans for what He wants to do through whomever He chooses.

The law of primogeniture can be seen in Genesis 25: 31 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17. God knew this law. The researcher does not understand why God would want to break this natural, traditional law of birthright that Isaac and Esau believed in. It is not clear why God wills this inversion of "natural right." God had a different, hidden agenda with Jacob, the younger son. It seems like He revealed the plan to him when they were in their mother's womb, so Jacob started fighting for the birthright. "The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, 'Why is this happening to me?'" (Genesis 25:22 NIV). Esau won the race in the womb and was born first. Even so, Jacob would not let him go. They came out of the womb with Jacob grasping Esau's heel.

They grew up. Poor Esau was happy. He became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country. He enjoyed hunting. His father had a taste for wild game and loved Esau, but they had no idea what was going on in the minds of God, Jacob, and Rebekah. Isaac and Esau were comfortable and happy. They enjoyed hunting. They were legalists. They

knew that Isaac had inherited his Father Abraham's property and leadership. They knew the law of primogeniture. Esau, the firstborn son, would inherit it from Isaac, no question about it. It was his birthright. The researcher wonders if Isaac thought about the miracle story of his birth, about his half-brother Ishmael, the firstborn son of Abraham who had the birthright, except that God had a different idea, to give Abraham and Sarah a son of promise who would carry on His covenantal line. That son was Isaac.

Isaac knew that according to the law of primogeniture, Esau would be the heir. What about Jacob? What would he be? Isaac and Esau did not worry about Jacob; he would be the "underdog."⁵ Isaac and Esau were bound by the tradition and status quo embodied in the law of primogeniture. They had no idea that God planned to reject that hierarchical system. Isaac had forgotten that God had done it with his parents Abraham and Sarah by choosing him to be heir instead of Ishmael.

Esau was a natural interventionist according to tradition but not serious about his traditional and cultural rights, or natural birthright. He had no idea how serious Jacob was. Jacob was looking for any opportunity to take his birthright. As the serpent had planned to tempt Adam and Eve, looking for an opportunity to lure them and one day using Eve's desire to entice her to eat from the wrong tree, Jacob caught Esau at the right time to get his birthright one day when he was very hungry:

When Jacob was cooking some stew; Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick let me have some of that red stew! I am famished! Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look! I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34 NIV).

⁵ Matt Keller, *God of the Underdogs: When the Odds are Against You, God is for You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Books, 2013), 1

Esau failed to secure his birthright because of ignorance and carelessness, which are menaces to success. So, Jacob got Esau's birthright. He had been planning to get it, looking for any opportunity since birth. The goal of this birthright fight was their father's blessing. Now, Jacob had it! But he might have asked himself, "Will I receive my father's blessing when he dies? What about my brother Esau? Will he get mad at me on the day our father dies and I get the blessing that everyone in our community knows should belong to him? I know he swore an oath to me, but what will happen if he breaks it?"

Fortunately, Jacob's mother favored him, and though he did not know it, she would help him to pursue God's blessing by trickery and deceit. Walter Russell Bowie writes, "As between her twin sons, she wanted Jacob to have the best of everything, no matter how he got it; and to that end she would not scruple at trickery and unfairness both toward her husband and her son Esau."⁶ For Jacob, not only his mom was on his side, God was too. It is an astonishing and incredible game! God, Rebekah, and Jacob were on one side, Isaac and Esau on the other. Poor Esau and his old father Isaac were on the old static managerial leadership system. No teamwork for them, but hierarchical patriarchy was the only system of leadership they knew to carry on.

For old Isaac and his favorite son Esau, no dream, vision, or change was needed. Their future was in their hands, their traditional beliefs, natural right, and customary law. They had no worries or plans for the future because they had the law of primogeniture on their side. Everyone in the community knew the status quo. The firstborn son was the heir. But near-sighted old Isaac had no idea what had already happened to his beloved heir Esau, that he had already sold his birthright to Jacob. The only thing he knew was

⁶ Walter Russell Bowie, *The Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 668.

getting older and weaker. One day he called Esau to pass on his will, leadership, and blessings to him.

When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son,” “Here I am,” he answered. Isaac said, “I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. Now then, get your equipment, your quiver, and bow, and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you blessing before I die” (Genesis 27:1-4 NIV).

Isaac had a great leadership strategy for his favored son Esau, a well-planned and timely instruction to give him, soon to be his blessed successor. Isaac was ready to pass the leadership of his household to Esau as tradition required. He knew that the authority structure was simple, linear and hierarchical. There was no room in his mind to imagine that his wife and God had different plan for the “underdog.”⁷ Jacob the younger son would be the successor instead of Esau. Isaac had no idea that while he was giving instructions to Esau, his wife was listening.

Rebekah got the message and heard the plan for Isaac’s blessing. The firstborn son Esau whom she had not teamed up with was about to get Isaac’s blessing? No way! She urgently had to do something about this situation! Rebekah was smart, and might have quickly thought, “I must tell Jacob that I am with him to help him get his father’s blessing instead of Esau. We must do whatever we can. I will advise Jacob to bring two goats for me to cook for him.” Rebekah was the coach and mentor of Jacob’s team.

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ‘bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die. Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he

⁷ Keller, 1

likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies. Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.” His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me (Genesis 27:6-13 NIV).

Rebekah was committed. She meant business in support of her beloved son. She had received the revelation from God that the older brother would serve the younger but Isaac, who lived according to tradition, was outside the sphere of God’s agenda. Without knowing Rebekah and Jacob’s plan, and lacking sight, Isaac could not see Jacob when he brought him his tasty food. What a trick! Isaac was hungry for Esau’s wild game; the tasty meat he liked. Usually, Esau hunted far away and it could take a while for him to come back. So Isaac noticed that Jacob came sooner.

Jacob said to him, “My father. “Yes my son,” he answered.” “Who is it?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your first born. I have done what you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” Isaac asked his son, how did you find it so quickly, my son? “The Lord your God gave me success,” he replied. Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not (Genesis 27:18-21 NIV).

The trick kept Isaac from recognizing Jacob. His mother was smart and had put hair on Jacob’s hands and neck. Isaac recognized Jacob’s voice but wanted to make sure by touching him because Esau’s hands were hairy. When Isaac touched Jacob’s hands, they felt hairy, and he “said, ‘the voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau.’ He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. ‘Are you really my son Esau?’ he asked. ‘I am’ he replied” (Genesis 27:22-24 NIV). Congratulation Jacob, you did it! The researcher imagines that God and Rebekah were happy that Jacob got the birthright and Isaac’s blessing because that was what they had worked hard to achieve.

But Esau was ignorantly and honestly still out in the open country looking for real game, not knowing that the competition was over. Finally, he got the wild animal, came back home, cooked it deliciously, and went to his father.

My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you? “I am your son,” he answered, your first born, Esau.” Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and blessed him and indeed he will be blessed.” When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me, me too, my father! But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.” Esau got mad and cried and murmured in rage toward his brother. He said, isn’t he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing!

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, and then I will kill my brother Jacob.” When Rebekah was told that her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran. Stay with him for a while until your brother’s fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I will send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day? (Genesis 27:31-36, 41-45 NIV).

Even though Esau was careless about his birthright, he was not careless about his father’s blessing. He wanted that, whatever else was lost. And his bigheartedness was shown not only to one he loved; he could be generous and upright even to Jacob, who had defrauded him. At first his hot blood flared into such anger that Jacob ran away fast and far. But in the end, when Jacob cautiously came home, with timid stratagems to conciliate Esau by gifts sent in advance, Esau made them all look cheap by his own generosity of spirit as he “ran to meet [Jacob], and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him (Genesis 35:4 NIV). Esau forgave Jacob. Esau was not the kind of man who could keep a grudge. He would rather be fond of people than go on hating, even when he had a right to hate. In any time or place a man like Esau will be loved. He may be easygoing, careless

and lacking in any exhausting principles or fixed aims, so that he may be set down in public records as a poor sort of citizen, yet has such impulsive loving-kindness that he is immensely attractive.

The rivalry between Esau and Jacob is not only about getting the benefit of the birthright and their father's blessing, but also about leadership that gives glory to God. God always changes any leadership that is not in line with His will.

This account in Genesis helps people to learn that the people who looked back to Jacob as their forefather were destined to greatness not through any chances of human history, but through the sovereign purpose of God. Nothing that should happen to Jacob or through Jacob could be explained by contingent or superficial factors of time and place. What he was to be was predestined, and that predestination was active even before he came out of the womb!

No wonder Jacob's brother Esau and uncle Laban had to forgive him. God was dealing with them. "Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad'" (Genesis 31:24 NIV). God was on Jacob's side and had a plan to carry out His leadership program through Jacob. Even though Jacob took God's privilege to the extreme by his selfish, human lust for blessings, God later came to meet him face to face and he wrestled with God. Jacob would not let God go unless He blessed him. God blessed Jacob and changed his name to Israel. He had struggled with God and human beings and overcome because God allowed him to triumph (Genesis 32:22-29).

What the researcher has learned about Cain, Jacob, and Esau is what humans, including the people of Gambella, have experienced throughout history: the misuse of

power, which always leads to an escalation of violence. Since the time of Cain, humans have seen how violence escalates until all civilization is in trouble. The human propensity for bloodshed has been with them from the beginning, when they disobeyed God's first commandment. Whenever evil takes some form of violence, more violence is not going to solve anything, in Gambella or anywhere else. People should not fight with each other over a natural right to territory, or out of jealousy and envy of others' unique gifts, dreams, talents, properties, and status. People should enjoy serving God and each other with their unique personalities and traits, but the sinful nature that all other human beings have inherited from Adam and Eve still haunts people's lives. Only some people of God like Joseph understand that jealousy and hatred are terrible. Yet Joseph, a son of Jacob, understood that only forgiveness could heal his hurt and pain that was caused by his brothers. He had to forgive them because God revealed His plan to Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. According to the account of Joseph below, he experienced tragedy at the hands of his brothers who became jealous because of their father's love and Joseph's dream.

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. 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 a richly ornamented robe for 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. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more (Genesis 37:2-5 NIV).

From these accounts of Cain versus Abel, Esau versus Jacob, and Joseph versus his brothers, the researcher thinks people can see that the conflicts they have experienced might be caused by four factors: (1) God's intervention in family affairs for His special

will, (2) parents loving and favoring some sons more than others, (3) traditional leadership transition, and (4) the right of succession.

God the creator, who knew the intentions of the hearts, the inclinations of the thoughts, and the feelings of the souls of His people, also knew why He had created them. He created them to worship Him. He gives them authority to rule their world, to eat the right food from the right trees, to rule animals and reptiles, and to take care of the environment where He put them. But since Adam and Eve broke the commandment of God in the Garden of Eden where God put them to rule, their disobedience ruined God's plan of living and working with human beings. The relationship between God and human beings was messed up because of evil desires in their hearts caused by their sinful nature. This evil, called hatred, lingers among the ethnic groups of Gambella, which is one reason why the researcher wants to make a petition for God's forgiveness.

The researcher believes that God can listen to his prayerful petition for the people of Gambella since throughout the Old Testament, God compassionately, mercifully, graciously and patiently worked with His people, answering their prayers for forgiveness, leading them toward reconciliation. He planned to redeem human beings back to their right relationship with Him. But His people could not get His revelation easily. Human beings have been in severe conflict with God to the point that the Bible says He regretted creating them. "The Lord God was grieved that he had made man on earth, and his heart was filled with pain. The Lord God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5-6 NIV).

The wickedness that human beings received from the rebellious angels ruined the relationship between them and God. Human hearts filled with such evils as hatred, envy, greed, jealousy, foolish pride, selfishness, abuse, disobedience to parents, ungodliness, lack of love, deceit, non-forgiveness, violence, and more.

So far the readers have seen the manifestation of these evils when Cain killed Abel, Jacob deceived Esau and Isaac, and Joseph's brothers tried to kill him, but sold him to merchants from Egypt because they were jealous. Joyce Meyer is right that "Jealousy is a terrible thing. It is a sin of the heart."⁸ Joseph's brothers thought that their father loved him more than them, and that he had a special dream that suggested that God would make him their ruler when it seemed unbelievable for the youngest brother to rule them. His brothers might have thought that God had a different plan for their younger brother since they knew that God had violated the law of primogeniture and chosen their father over his older brother. God might have wanted to make Joseph rule over them. The researcher assumes that the thoughts of Joseph's brothers were focused on the interpretation of his dream. He can see a hint of their thoughts in the biblical account.

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to each other, "here he comes, the dreamer! Now let us kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we will see what comes of his dreams (Genesis 37:17-18 NIV).

What they did not know was that dreams from God never die, even though they were jealous of Joseph's dream. They might have thought, "If this boy's dream comes to pass, he will be our leader. No way! We've got to kill him so that he will die with his

⁸ Joyce Meyer, *Do Yourself a Favor... Forgive: Learn How to Take Control of Your Life Through Forgiveness* (New York: Faith Words, Hachette Book Group, 2012), 33.

dream.” They did not know that they could not kill his dream if it came from God. Jealousy blinded their understanding. Joyce Meyer writes, “We see the root of jealousy causing anger and contention.”⁹ Joseph’s brothers were jealous, and their jealousy made them angry enough to sell Joseph to slave traders. The researcher thinks that God interrupted and stopped their plan to kill Joseph because of their jealousy and anger at him, and let them sell him to the Egyptians instead. God was with Joseph!

According to Genesis 37-50, Joseph suffered at the hand of his brothers and the adulterous wife of Potiphar, who wanted to entice him into a sinful act. But Joseph was a righteous and faithful man of God and refused to sleep with her after she made many attempts to lure him into adultery. Joseph told her, “No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9 NIV).

Faithfulness, holiness, and the gift of discerning the presence of God helped Joseph to remain strong in the midst of the trials, persecutions, imprisonment, torture, shame and humiliations, hunger, and thirst that he endured. The good God of his fathers encouraged and comforted him. He lived through those tough times until God honored him and made him a leader, the second person in the kingdom of Egypt.

God fulfilled Joseph’s dream. His family came to Egypt and bowed down before him as he had told them. The righteous God helped him not only to forgive his brothers, he also love them, be kind to them, provide for them, and care for their wellbeing.

But since Joseph’s brothers knew the wrong they had done to him, they did not believe that he really forgave them. They thought that Joseph was faking his forgiveness.

⁹ Meyer, 33.

He might forgive them out of respect for their father, but when their father died he might avenge himself by killing them.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said "what if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him? So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "your father left these instructions before he died: This is what you are going to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers' sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of God of your father. When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers were then come to throw themselves down before him. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them "don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:15-21 NIV).

Joseph forgave his brothers because he understood that it was the will of God. He said, "God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:7 NIV). Joseph foresaw the deliverance of his people, the Israelites. He knew that the faithful God would fulfill His promises to his people by taking them back to the land of Canaan that He had promised to them. "And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, 'God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place'" (Genesis 50:25 NIV). It was not so difficult for Joseph to forgive his brothers because he had experienced what God's compassion, mercy, love and forgiveness had accomplished in his life.

Like Joseph, there were several people of God in the Old Testament who knew the compassion, mercy, and forgiveness of God, but did not want this compassionate God to forgive wicked people. The researcher wants to choose the path of Joseph, who forgave his brothers, and he appeals to his people in Gambella, to motivate them to follow the way of Joseph. The researcher wants to encourage the people of Gambella to love the wrongdoers and offenders but hate the wrong they have done. He does not want them to be like the prophet Jonah who hated the wicked people of Nineveh.

According to the account of the prophet Jonah, God knew that the people in the great city of Nineveh had become wicked. He wanted the prophet Jonah to go there and preach against it because its wickedness has come up before Him (Jonah 1:2). Like God, Jonah also knew the wickedness of the people of Nineveh, but he refused the call of God. He ran away from the Lord, but the compassionate and merciful God forced him while he was angry at the Lord's compassion.

Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the Lord replied, "Have you any right to be angry?" Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a searching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said "It would be better for me to die than to live." But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?" (Jonah 4:1-11 NIV).

Based on this account of Jonah and the city of Nineveh, the researcher believes that God has concern in His heart for the people of Gambella. Even though there may be some people of God like Jonah who have gone to Gambella without concern for the people there, the researcher believes in the compassionate and merciful God of Jonah who was concerned and had compassion on the wicked people of Nineveh. The researcher presents a petition to this merciful God to forgive the people of Gambella. "Lord, forgive them," he prays!

If we have experienced God's forgiveness, we are under a moral obligation to forgive others. Learning from the Old Testament model of forgiveness, those who received grace and mercy from the Lord God were compelled to extend it toward those who hurt them. God delivered the Israelites from bondage and established a relationship with them based on faith, saying, "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people" (Leviticus 26:12 NIV). As their Sovereign Lord, He commanded them, "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:17-18 NIV).

Notice that the command to forgive does not mean denying the reality of someone's evil or rationalizing the wrong into a justifiable right (as the wrongdoer does). There is a place to call sin sinful and wrongdoing wrong. Silence can be a form of passive agreement with what is going on. "Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt," they were told (Leviticus 26:12 NIV). But besides that, God commands people to steer clear of hatred, thoughts of revenge, and harboring grudges. What is more, he commands people to love the unlovely persons in our lives! The basis of this command is that one's faith in God is the watchman of one's soul's health and happiness. "I am your God," says the God of love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Out of His grace, God alone forgives sin. The Israelites experienced God's forgiveness in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. As long as the temple stood, sacrificial atonement continued and the Israelites were assured of God's forgiveness. When the temple was destroyed and sacrifices ceased, God sent the prophetic word that He would graciously restore Israel out of exile and forgive its sins (Jeremiah 31:34 NIV).

The Old Testament saints, while involved in sacrificial rites, put their faith in the gracious God of mercy and forgiveness. He fulfilled his covenant promises of mercy, forgiveness, and physical and spiritual restoration through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Having written about Old Testament characters, the researcher now wants to highlight him, the main character and role model of forgiveness in the New Testament, who has power and authority to forgive, deliver, heal, and free the people of Gambella from the power of Satan and sin. The Bible says truly that whomever the Son, Jesus, sets free is free indeed (John 8:36). The forgiveness of Jesus Christ can be an example for people who follow him. He did not make threats even in the face of incredible suffering (1 Peter 2:23). He was spit on, His beard was pulled out, a crown of thorns was pressed onto His head, and nails were driven through his flesh to pin Him to a cross. In any other person, such unjust treatment would have caused feelings of retaliation to well up and burst out, but not Jesus Christ. He was the true Son of God – creator and sustainer of the universe, holy and sinless, with the power to send His tormentors into eternal flames. Yet He never threatened His executioners with judgment. Instead, He forgave them, saying “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34 NIV).

Jesus Christ died for sinners, including those who persecuted Him. He knew that the glory of salvation could be attained only by the path of suffering, so He accepted His suffering without bitterness, anger, or a spirit of revenge. May the people of Gambella respond as well to their suffering! Jesus’ way of forgiveness is what this project is all about. The researcher does not want the people of Gambella to retaliate because that would show they lack the confidence they ought to have in God’s ability to make things right in His own time, which will include punishing the unjust and rewarding those who

suffer faithfully. So the researcher wants to encourage the people of Gambella to give their hurts, painful tragedies, and atrocities to Jesus Christ, who was and is the master of forgiveness. He can carefully handle them as He has already done on the cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ is the true model of New Testament forgiveness.

New Testament Models of Forgiveness

Introduction

When the researcher prayed and thought about writing a paper on a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, he knew that the merciful God has already granted His forgiveness through His Son Jesus Christ, who has sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God by dying on the cross. As the writer of the book of John writes, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'" (John 1:29 NIV). The Lord Jesus Christ has already done the work of forgiveness on the cross. In his classic devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers reminds his reader that at the heart of the whole issue of forgiveness is the work accomplished on the cross of Christ. There is no forgiveness possible apart from the cross, so it is no insignificant matter. "It is shallow nonsense to say that God forgives us because He is love. . . . The love of God means Calvary, nothing less; the love of God is spilt on the cross, and nowhere else. The only ground on which God can forgive me is the Cross of my Lord."¹⁰

Calvary required agony that people cannot fully comprehend. On the cross, Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself, enduring the wrenching consequence of

¹⁰Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1937), 19

broken fellowship with His Father, the One He adored, the One from whom He had never experienced a moment's separation. That is impossible for mere human beings to fully grasp. It was a tremendous tragedy that the Lord Jesus Christ experienced, and forgiveness was won on the cross. There, the New Testament of forgiveness was born, the power of sin and death was broken, grace was offered to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ, and reconciliation was accomplished. Jesus Christ was anointed as Lord of lords, King of kings, the highest priest of priests, the redeemer, and the mediator between God and His people. He reconciled people with God and with each other through the forgiveness they received from God the Father by believing in His Son Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins is available to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Hebrews 1:1-3 NIV).

Jesus Christ, the king who sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, is the one who was nailed on the cross of Calvary. While feeling excruciating pain in His soul and body, He made a petition in prayer to His faithful father God to forgive His brutal, heinous killers. He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34 NIV). Jesus Christ had forgiven His persecutors. R.T. Kendall writes, "He had asked His father not to punish or take revenge on them. It was not a perfunctory prayer; Jesus meant it."¹¹ As He prayed, He knew that forgiving sins and carrying out punishment both belong to God alone. So those who believe in the Lord

¹¹ R.T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 15.

Jesus Christ must follow the New Testament models of forgiveness. This is a petition for God's forgiveness for the ethnic communities in Gambella, Ethiopia: please forgive.

New Testament Models

The New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament's prophecies. The concept of the New Testament is a perfect harmony of Old Testament forgiveness based on Jesus Christ. Forgiveness in the New Testament is directly linked to Him. As F. LeRon Shults states, "Mark, the earliest of the gospels, clearly links the arrival of Jesus with the Hebrew prophets' anticipation of the promise of forgiveness and the coming of the Messiah."¹² One understands that the New Testament is the continuation of the Old Testament. Ever since sin broke the relationship between God and human beings in the Old Testament, God had been planning how to break the power of sin over the hearts of human beings. As told in the New Testament, He sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for the sins of human beings and restore them to Himself. With this understanding, the researcher wants the people of Gambella to know that there is no more wrath of God toward human beings because Jesus Christ has broken the power of wrath, sin, and death. God has forgiven the sins of the world through His sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ, whom He sent to die for the sins of the whole world. As Jesus has forgiven His offenders, the researcher wants the people of Gambella to forgive theirs.

Concerning this Shults writes:

In Matthew, we find a close relation between divine and human forgiveness, which are linked together with coming of the kingdom of heaven as it impacts life on earth. The petition and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our

¹² F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage, *The Faces of Forgiveness: Searching for Wholeness and Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 13.

debtors is preceded in Matthew's version of the Lord's prayers by the request for God's Kingdom to present on earth as it is in heaven.¹³

God restores his relationship with human beings through His Son Jesus Christ, who sacrificed Himself on the cross in order to bring human beings back to Him. Jesus Christ offers forgiveness to anyone who believes in Him.

Luke 11:4 says that Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (NIV). Forgiveness is the key to anyone's salvation. Eternal life is found by faith in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is the demonstration of God's love in action. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life; For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:16-17 NIV).

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not only the King as Matthew says, but God also "exalted him with his right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts 5:31 NIV) through His sacrificial death on the cross (Romans 4:24) and His resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:15). He was the morally perfect sacrifice (Romans 8:3), the final and ultimate fulfillment of all Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews 9:11-10:18). Since He bore the law's death penalty against sinners (Galatians 3:10-13), those who trust in His sacrifice are freed from that penalty. By faith sinners are forgiven – "justified" in Paul's terminology (Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:8-9 NIV). Those who are forgiven sin's penalty also die to its controlling power in their lives (Romans 6).

¹³ Shults, 13.

Jesus Christ's resurrection was more than proof of His deity or innocence and was related in a special way to His forgiveness. It was an act by which God wiped out the false charges against Him. It was God's declaration of the perfect righteousness of His Son, the Second Adam, and of His acceptance of Christ's sacrifice (1 Timothy 3:16). Because He has been acquitted and declared righteous, this is also true for those whom He represents. Thus, Christ's resurrection was a necessary condition for the forgiveness of humanity's sins (1 Corinthians 15:12-28). To be forgiven is to be identified with Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection.

Christ has the authority to forgive sins (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 9:11-10:18). This forgiveness is an essential part of the gospel message (Acts 2:38; 5:31). But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (attributing to Satan a deed done by Jesus through the power of God's Spirit) is an unpardonable sin (Mark 3:28-29) – not because God cannot or will not forgive such a sin but because such a hard-hearted person puts himself or herself beyond the possibility of repentance and faith.

God's forgiveness of ones' sins demands that they forgive others, because grace brings responsibility and obligation (Matthew 18:23-35; Luke 6:37). Jesus placed no limits on the extent to which Christians are to forgive their fellow men and women (Matthew 18:22, 35; Luke 17:4). A forgiving spirit shows that one is a true follower of Christ (Matthew 5:43-48; Mark 11:25).

Christ's followers need to forgive those who wrong them because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, forgives their sins by dying on the cross for them. So they need to free their hearts, souls and spirits by forgiving others people who have sinned against them.

God wants them to free themselves from any unforgiving grudges. The Anyuwaa people, can also learn from others who went through horrible tragedies like them.

The researcher is not ignorant of the atrocity committed by Ethiopian highlanders against the Anyuwaa people. But as a Christian, the researcher must recognize that even though there are enemies, that is, opponents of the crucified and risen Christ, he is called to love them. He must no longer see wrongdoers or offenders as enemies. “Enemies are defined in the first instance by their unwillingness to live as forgiven and forgiving people, as people who seek to live in the light of God’s reconciliation.”¹⁴ In Gambella, enemies can be people and political entities who seek vengeance rather than forgiveness, who seek to dominate and abuse rather than repent and reconcile, who seek to repay violence with violence rather than love, who seek vain glory rather than humility. So, the researcher wants to let the Christians in Gambella know that as Christians, they are called to love their enemies. That is what Jesus Christ did on the cross. They need to forgive their enemies and reconcile with them, and for this, they need to know the theology of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Theology of Reconciliation, Forgiveness, and Non-forgiveness

Reconciliation is a term that relates to conflict resolution. It has deep theological meaning within Christianity, though believed to emerge from social science. It is derived from the Latin word “conciliates,” which connotes coming together, or assembly.¹⁵ It is

¹⁴ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 162.

¹⁵ Assefa Hizkias, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: Philosophy of Peace and its Implications on Conflict, Governance and Economic Growth in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: ACIS, 1993), 9.

biblically and theologically rooted, encompassing the idea of forgiveness. It refers to the process or act by which people who have been divided from one another can come together and their relationship be restored.

Reconciliation is a process of peace-building that heals the painful relationships that exist between warring parties. It builds their relationship through justice and peace. Reconciliation is a process of conflict resolution and peace-building that restores and enhances a community's spirit so its people can live in a peaceful environment.

In his small booklet *Peace and Reconciliation*, Professor Assefa Hizkias identifies three biblical concepts of reconciliation.¹⁶ First, reconciliation with God, as the Lord Jesus Christ creates harmony between Christians and God by mending the conflict that divides them. This kind of reconciliation involves personal feelings and emotions. It encompasses confession, repentance, and forgiveness of the wrong that has been done to one's life or loved ones. Secondly, Assefa writes of reconciliation with "self." The fact that conflict can be personalized and internalized enables individual Christians to reconcile themselves with God, who forgives and forgets the wrong committed. In order for this kind of reconciliation to be viable, confession and repentance are prerequisite. The third component of reconciliation is with neighbor and the human community. This kind of reconciliation is important in terms of one's relationship with other people. As people in conflict are reconciled with God and themselves, it is essential indeed that they be reconciled with the people living with them. Once people are reconciled with their neighbors, they start to live a new life of being forgiven and forgiver at the same time. These three dimensions of reconciliation are important elements in Christian theology

¹⁶ Hizkias, 10.

with roots in the Bible. Reconciliation aims at building and restoring the community's relationship and has to begin with forgiveness.

David Augsburger has written many books on forgiveness. One is *The New Freedom of Forgiveness*. In this book, he wants his readers to ask questions such as, why would anyone seek to forgive when resentment feels so good, when anger seems so justified, and when healing would cost so much? Why not take the safer path of flight or fight? Why should one forgive? There are many hurt individuals and groups who are experiencing pain from injustices and atrocities that were done to them. They don't even imagine forgiving their wrongdoers.

When the injustice is so painful, who can avoid asking, why should I forgive? What is the point? Why shouldn't the person who has wronged me be made to pay for his or her sins? Why shouldn't he or she be punished? Why shouldn't he or she suffer? These questions can be legitimate for persons who have experienced pain and hurt and tragedies caused by someone else.¹⁷

If any conviction about such things comes naturally, it is the deep seated belief that "somebody's got to pay." Forgiveness is too easy. There should be blood for blood, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. Augsburger asks, "If it is a tooth that one can require, tooth for tooth in retaliation but what repayments can anyone demand from the man who has broken your home or betrayed your daughter? What can you ask from the woman who has ruined your reputation?"¹⁸ The researcher agrees that very few sins can be paid for, and very seldom does the victim possess the power or advantage to demand payment.

¹⁷ David Augsburger, *The New Freedom of Forgiveness*. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2002), 23.

¹⁸ Augsburger, *The New Freedom*, 14.

In most cases, making things right is impossible. The researcher thinks that those who want revenge need to ask themselves how they can get back what another has taken from them emotionally, socially, and relationally. Repayment is impossible, though at first it is desirable. What then of revenge? If you cannot get equal payment or restitution from the offender, at least you can get vengeance. If the one who wronged you cannot repay you, perhaps you can pay him or her back in kind, “tit for tat.” If we cause the same problem, then the cycle of hurt, pain, and tragedy will continue; the freedom and peace we desire will not come because “an eye for an eye” brings new pain. The researcher agrees with Augsburgers that the traditional path of an “eye for an eye is not a path of freedom. There is an intrinsic and insurmountable problem as we try to get even, we actually become even with our enemy. We bring ourselves to the same level and below. There is a saying that ‘Doing an injury gets you even, but only forgiving sets you above.’”¹⁹

Those who forgive enemies put their lives above their enemies’ lives; they free themselves from the sinful act that their enemies have committed against their loved ones and themselves. If they offer them God’s forgiveness, they are doing themselves a favor. Joyce Meyer, a Christian minister of the gospel and author of many books, advises, “Do yourself a favor, and forgive.”²⁰ By forgiving your offenders, you do yourself a favor. You will be freed mentally, emotionally (heart and soul) and spiritually. By forgiving your enemies, you are giving yourself freedom to experience the gift of God that Jesus Christ offers to those who believe in His forgiveness. Augsburgers quotes what George Hebert, an English poet, hymn writer, and pastor once wrote, “One who cannot forgive

¹⁹ Augsburgers, *The New Freedom*, 40.

²⁰ Joyce Meyer, *Do Yourself a Favor . . . Forgive* (Nashville, TN: Faith Words, 2012), 38.

others, breaks the bridge over which all must pass if they would ever reach heaven; for anyone has needed to be forgiven?"²¹ Forgiving and being forgiven are all of one piece. God forgives His people to forgive others. In giving, they receive. Accepting those who have injured them, they open themselves to God's acceptance. There is no sequence of time or priority. The two are one. Anyone who loves God shows it in neighbor-love. The rush of God's strength, which brings forgiveness, gives in turn the ability to forgive and forgive again.

They should know that forgiveness is something they do for themselves, not for the other. It is not for the one who has hurt them; it is done for their own good. They free themselves from the continuation of pain and the review of anger. They forgive others because they themselves deserve the healing, no matter what the other deserves.

Forgiveness is taking ownership; it is taking control of the past. The purpose of forgiveness is to reclaim control of one's own life by letting go of unpleasant events and people, moving on from the injury, and turning toward the future. By forgiving another one evicts the other from occupying his or her mind, heart, and soul rent free and usurping his or her thought life. One refuses to be held hostage emotionally by the criminal action of enemies.

Many other writers, such as Pastor T.D. Jakes, advises letting it go. Forgive so you can be forgiven. Forgiveness is in the power of anyone to choose, to act, to leap ahead. It is a power each one possesses independently of the other's attitudes or actions.²²

²¹ Augsburg, 38.

²² T.D. Jakes, *Let it Go: Forgive so You Can Be Forgiven* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2012), 1.

Forgiveness is a courageous choice, a decisive act, a wise potion, a noble move away from entrapment to new freedom. Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon have written a book entitled *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get on with Your Life*. Like the other authors above, they write about letting go and moving on with our lives. It is all about forgiving the people who hurt us, not as a favor to them, but so we can let go of the pain and get on with our lives again. So forgive them! Be free from anger, bitterness, resentment, and non-forgiveness.

It is true that the life that someone can keep by not forgiving is not nearly as full and fulfilling as the life they could create by letting go of the pain and making peace with the people who have hurt them by forgiving them. They need to forgive their enemies because forgiveness is a way of reaching beyond a past pain, reaching to the healing process of reconciliation that moves them to the positive future.²³

They need to forgive others in order to be healed from the pain and hurt they have brought to them. Forgiveness is a byproduct of an ongoing healing process. Many people grew up believing that forgiveness was an act to be performed or an attitude to process, and the reason why they could not forgive was that they were not trying hard enough. But what really keeps them from forgiving the people who hurt them is that the wounds they inflicted had not yet healed. They need to forgive them in order to heal from the pain they have created in their hearts.

Forgiveness is a gift that people can receive at the end of the healing process. They find it waiting for them when they reach a point where they stop expecting their enemies to pay for what they had done to them or make it up somehow. So forgiveness is

²³ Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon, *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get on with Your Life* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1990), 54.

internal healing and a process to freedom and peace. It can happen to anyone. It is a feeling of wellness and freedom and acceptance. Those feelings can be theirs at any time, as long as they want to heal and are willing to try hard even though they are still hurt and in pain from the atrocities that the other people have done to them. They need to let go of the pain and the intense emotions connected with incidents from their past. Yes, they will still remember what happened, but they no longer feel intensely angry, frightened, bitter, resentful, or damaged because of it. Forgiveness becomes an option once pain from the past stops dictating how they live their lives today and realize that what has happened in the past does not have to determine what will happen to them in the future.

People need to be fully aware of their present situation and their heart's condition and be open to God with whatever is in their hearts. Rami M. Shapiro writes, "When your awareness is on the present rather than the past or the future you are open to what is."²⁴ In the context of this paper, forgiveness offers present freedom to the people Gambella. They do not need to hang on to past hurt and pain. They need to leave them in the past. As Susan Wilkerson tells hurting people who are getting past their past,²⁵ the researcher wants to encourage his people to pass over their pain and hurts and proceed to the path of reconciliation, freedom and forgiveness.

The people of Gambella do not need to hold on to non-forgiveness, which is like a disease and can destroy their hearts. Deborah D. Delbridge is right to write, "The most common disease of the soul caused from a past event is the disease of nonforgiveness,

²⁴ Rami M. Shapiro, *Open Secrets: the Letters of Reb Yerachmiel Yiseael* (Rhinebeck, New York: Monkfish Book publishing Company, 2004), 27.

²⁵ Susan Wilkerson, *Getting Past your Past: Finding Freedom from the Pain of Regret* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 1998), 57

and I believe a very high percentage of believers carry it.”²⁶ The researcher agrees that the disease of non-forgiveness has turned the souls of Gambella into wounded souls and caused extreme trauma to their lives. Only forgiving others can set us free.

Surely, not forgiving others can become a disease called non-forgiveness. The root of non-forgiveness, which we do not see or acknowledge, has mutated and spread to more people than other diseases of the soul. If we hold on to not forgiving others, it becomes the most dangerous disease of our souls which can taint our perspective on God. The people of Gambella, especially the Anyuwaa ethnic groups, can actually harbor bitterness, anger and rebellion against God so that deep down inside their hearts, they see God as an enemy. Non-forgiveness not only invites deceptive thinking but also blocks direct blessings from God.

Healing the wounds of past events and showing people how to uproot the tentacles of this disease are very easy for God. The problem is that many are comfortable with their diseases. They don't acknowledge their existence and don't want to change. Changing would require embracing a different identity, and human nature resists change. They need to change from unforgiving hearts, minds and souls. They should not want to be like most wounded people who carry a spirit of offense, and a victim mentality rooted in non-forgiveness.

Praise God! He wants to heal their hearts. Psalm 103:24 says, “Bless the Lord O’ my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgive all your iniquities, who heal all your diseases” (NIV). Even if their diseases of the soul are rooted in a past wound or event, God promises them that all they need to do is forgive their offenders and cooperate with

²⁶ Deborah D. Delbridge, *Disease of the Soul: Confronting the Hidden Issues of the Heart* (Irvine, CA: Creation House, 2003), 57.

the Holy Spirit. They need to receive healing by confessing their iniquities to God, asking Him to forgive them, and then forgiving others. They need to watch the presence of not forgiving in their hearts, minds, and souls. They need to forgive their offenders so that God will forgive them and heals their wounded hearts.

Colin Tipping writes, “If we don’t heal whatever needs to be healed, we must create more discomfort until we are literally forced to ask, ‘what is going on here?’ Sometimes the message has become very loud or the pain extremely intense, before we pay attention.”²⁷ According to Tipping, the people of Gambella need to pay careful attention to unforgiving hearts. They need to know that the world of resentment and bitterness is a small, ever shrinking world of ever-diminishing possibilities. It is a trajectory of collapse into the singularity of resentment, which is not forgiving, and has a devastating way of eliminating new possibilities. Everything remains chained to the past and injustices suffered become a stronghold in the lives of embittered souls. But the choice to forgive breaks the tyranny of injustice and the bitterness it seeks to create.

The researcher encourages people of Gambella to create a new lifestyle in their region by forgiving the people they think are their enemies because of the wrongs they have done to them. The people who killed the Anyuwaa people in Gambella had a similar attitude to the Nazi German government that thought Jewish people were not real human beings and needed to be killed. But do not be like your murderers. They need to stop the cycle of hatred and atrocities by forgiving the murderers of their loved ones, breaking the cycle of the Anyuwaa phrase “*Thoo bangudi Deraa*,” which means “Death doesn’t end up to me alone.” I will avenge or retaliate. But the researcher wants to say to his dear

²⁷ Colin Tipping. *Radical Forgiveness: A Revolutionary Five- Stage Process to Heal Relationships, Let go of Anger and Blame, Find Peace in Any Situation* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2009), 136.

people, "*Thoo Ngude Roo ki per benyo maro.*" It is for our own good that we forgive our wrongdoers because it was for our faith, goodness, and fertile land that our beloved people were murdered. Let us say together, "No more!" As Jesus said, "It is finished!" He was in excruciating pain on the cross when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34 NIV). He knew that His death would create a new life, new spirit, new worldview, and a New Testament of forgiveness.

The world of forgiveness is a world of new and expanding possibilities. Very often people are afraid to forgive because they assume that if they forgive, injustice will triumph. Yet the counterintuitive wisdom of Christ reveals that the very opposite is true. It is forgiveness alone that has the capacity to break the chains of injustice and give one the possibility of a new future – a future unchained from the past and free of bitterness. And this is why Jesus Christ calls His disciples to the demanding discipline of loving enemies. They hear challenging words of Jesus Christ from the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy', but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45 NIV). Any believer who knows that he or she has been forgiven by God the Father must forgive others since he or she has received mercy and forgiveness from God.

As the people of Gambella themselves need mercy and forgiveness from God, it is good for them to also give mercy and forgiveness to others – the killers who are in desperate need of forgiveness from God and them. Thomas Merton writes, "The Lord of all justice is jealous of his prerogative as the father of mercy, and the supreme expression

of His justice is to forgive those whom no one else would ever have forgiven.”²⁸ Only those who have had to face despair are really convinced that they need mercy. It is better to find God on the threshold of despair than to risk one’s life in complacency that has never felt the need of forgiveness. A life without problems may literally be more hopeless than one that always verges on despair.

People are all hurt in one way or another by each other. All need mercy and justice from God, who is the only true judge. All are in desperate need of forgiveness from each other in order to go through life on a new path to a new destination which is reconciliation, freedom and peace of our hearts, minds and souls.

People won’t go through life without ever getting hurt, wounded, or offended. Experience tells us that life is filled with injustices. However, they can be freed from the pain of those who wounded them by letting them go and trusting God to be their vindicator and bring justice into their lives.²⁹ All people are living in some sort of pain and therefore, they need to ask God in prayer. “I tell you whatever you ask for in prayers believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand asking in prayer, if you hold anything against anyone forgive them, so that your father in heaven may forgive your sins” (Mark 11:24-26 NIV).

Forgiveness is letting what was, be gone; what will be, come; what is now, be vivid and alive. In forgiving ones’ enemies, people end their dependence on past predicaments, problems, failures and say goodbye to them with finality. They need to let go of their pains and hurts. They need to understand that letting go of their pains is

²⁸ Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, edited by Robert Inchausti, (Boston, MA: Shambala, 2002), 134-5.

²⁹ Meyer, 59

relaxing their grip on pain. They need to realize that most human pain is caused by holding on or holding back. Holding on to the past is like attaching one's nerve endings to an object outside oneself which is stuck, stationary. One must either stay with it to avoid pain, or feel ones nerve fibers slowly drawn into wire-like threads of torture. But since time moves inexorably forward, one cannot stay with the past. Painful results of past hurt and pain are only released by forgiveness. An equal source of pain is found in the fantasy of holding back from the future.

Letting go is necessary if one is to find release from the pain of past hurt. Letting go allows one to flow forward again with the movement of time, to be present once more with oneself, one's companions, one's community, one's country, and one's universe. So, relief from past hurt and pain comes as one is willing to release the hatred and bitterness being held against others.

The failure to forgive others is ultimately the failure to forgive oneself. So set yourself free by forgiving your adversaries. Lewis B. Smedes writes, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner is you."³⁰

When people harbor resentment toward another, they are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and be freed.³¹ Forgiveness can break the power of hatred, anger, bitterness, resentment, and non-forgiveness that links our hearts to our past hurt and pain and can release us to see the resolution in a new way.

³⁰ Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts when Don't Deserve* (New York: Harper One, an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 96.

³¹ Matthew West, *Forgiveness: Overcoming the Impossible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 39-43.

Without forgiveness there would never be resolution of any issue. And where there is no resolution, there is no freedom, and where there is no freedom, there is no unity and peace. Forgiveness brings reconciliation, restoration, and a peaceful life back to a forgiver's heart, mind and soul. People need forgiveness for their own freedom from their hurts and pain.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

History of the Conflict and Cause of the Hatred in Gambella

Introduction

Even though this research is limited to the Gambella region, the researcher wants to touch briefly on the historical leadership of Ethiopia in order to show how it has impacted Gambella's affairs and ethnic conflicts.

Ethiopia is a country with diverse nations and nationalities that include many ethno-linguistic groups. Each of these groups has its own culture and values, which are important to maintain the identity of the people. The fact that the country has multiple linguistic groups motivated the current Ethiopian government to adopt a Federal Constitution that allows those ethnic communities located in one geographical area to form a state government. It is this condition, enshrined in the Constitution that enabled Gambella to be one of the regions in Ethiopia after the fall of the military regime in 1991.

Many writers suggest that the land of Gambella was incorporated into Ethiopian national territory during the imperial time, which goes back to 1902. According to Dereje and Medhane Tadesse, the integration of the Gambella Region into the Ethiopian territory was motivated by the government's economic interests in the area.¹ Of particular interest to the government of Ethiopia were gold mining and the ivory trade. This policy of integration was weakened to the extent that measures were taken to empower and

¹ Dereje Feyissa, *The Experience* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Addis Ababa University Press, 2006), 219.

encourage local communities and denounce ethnic differences and traditional conflicts that the indigenous people used to have.

Medhane Tadesse claims that the policy of integrating the Gambella region into the Ethiopian political map continued until the outbreak of the EPDRF 1991, which introduced a system of ethnic-based federation into the country.² Under this system, the five ethnic minorities in Gambella have been exercising political rights by administering their region since 1991.

Since the fall of the military regime in 1991, and the introduction of the Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism Constitution, there have been multiple violent conflicts in the region. Their escalation has led to the destruction of property, loss of human life, displacement of thousands of households from their original residences, and the smuggling of products in Gambella. The transitional period of the EPDRF government was a period of ethnic clashes and fighting there.³ It was a period of sorrow and painful grievances among the innocent people who lost loved ones. But for the regional politicians, it was a period of struggle and competition to gain political power over each other through the deprivation of each other's rights. These conflicts were quite destructive, which stirred the heart of the researcher to make a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella. Keeping the case of

² Medhane Tadesse, *The Impact of the Local Conflict on the Regional Security*, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Addis Ababa University Press, 2006), 2.

³ James Gatdet Tang, *A The Nuer-Anywaa Ethnic Conflicts and the Role of the faith Based Organizations in Peace Building in Gambella Regional State: A Thesis Submitted to the Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: EGST, 2011).

Gambella in mind, the researcher wants to talk about the historical background of leadership in Ethiopia.⁴

Historical Background of Ethiopia

The history of the evolution of the contemporary Ethiopian state is a source of profound contention in Gambella. On one hand, pan-Ethiopian nationalists argue that the Ethiopian state is an ancient, unified entity created through incorporation. The assimilation of minority cultures into the mainstream Amhara culture made the creation of the Ethiopian state possible. According to this perspective, Ethiopia is a melting pot *par excellence*.⁵ This perspective depicts Ethiopia as a nation-state. On the other hand, ethno-nationalist groups, such as the Somali and Oromo nationalists, claim that contemporary Ethiopia is a relatively young state created through conquest and internal colonization. Abyssinia (the historic core of Ethiopian polity) colonized over half of the current Ethiopian territories and peoples to form a colonial empire-state only in the last quarter of the 19th century. Ethiopia, from the ethnic-nationalist vantage point, is a colonial empire that needs to undergo decolonization through which "ethnic-national" colonies become independent states. The image portrayed by this perspective is one of Ethiopia as a colonial-state.⁶

⁴ Ojot Meru Ojulu. *Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master Degree in Peace Studies: Minorities and Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: the Experience of Gambella People National and Regional*. (Bradford, England: Bradford University, 2008)32-33

⁵ Zewde Gabre Sellassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1.

⁶ Alem Habtu, "Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Background, Present Conditions and Future Prospects" (paper submitted to the Second EAF International Symposium on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, Ghion Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2003), 8.

Mainstream Ethiopian history claims that Ethiopia as an organized and independent polity dates back to the first century AD, with the first kingdom in the Abyssinian highlands located at Axum, which today straddles northern Ethiopia and southern Eritrea. The Axumite king Ezana, in the mid-fourth century, adopted Christianity, and this became one of the important elements that shaped subsequent Ethiopian history. The rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century, however, crippled and isolated the Axumites culturally and commercially from the Christian world, particularly the Byzantine Empire.⁷

The building of the contemporary Ethiopian state did not begin until the rise of Emperor Tewodros II in 1885. This ended the instability and rivalry of the *Zemene Mesafint* (Era of Princes), the period of Ethiopian history from 1769 to 1855, known for violent struggles among princes including Gojam, Tigray, Wollo and others, fighting for control of the imperial center, Gondar.⁸ Eventually, Emperor Tewodros II lost the support of the regional kings, which greatly contributed to the collapse of his rule as he became more authoritarian. In the fight among regional kings to succeed him, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889), the regional king of Tigray, won and became the first Tigrayan Emperor to take the throne from the Amhara. Unlike Tewodros II, who chose the path of confrontation with regional powers, Yohannes IV delegated power to monarchs who recognized him as “king of kings” over all the regional kings. After the death of Yohannes in 1889, Menelik II (1889-1913), an Amhara, managed to restore the throne

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, “Facts about Ethiopia,” accessed June, 2008, http://www.mfa.gov.et/Facts_About_Ethiopia/Facts.php.

⁸ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1974* (London: James Curry, 1999) , 11.

from the Tigrayan line of succession. Emperor Menelik II, known as the modernizer, pursued a policy of expansion. He expanded his authority from the Northern highland towns to the east and south of the country and established the borders of contemporary Ethiopia. He defeated powerful traditional kingdoms including some who had not previously been under the rule of Abyssinia such as the Wolaita, the Oromo, the Gurage, the Sidama, the Kafa and others. These people were defeated and forced into submission to the Abyssinian State, a conquest similar to that of the European colonization elsewhere in Africa.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the contemporary Ethiopian state had come into being and Menelik focused on consolidating his new empire. With the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 between France, Britain and Italy, Ethiopia secured its international legitimacy as an independent and sovereign state.⁹

All along, some Ethiopians have been asking question whether the contemporary Ethiopia is a nation-state or a colonial-state. In this case, we have to look at the motives for expansion among the successive Abyssinian rulers, the process of expansion, and the systems of power consolidation applied in the newly conquered territories, then compare these systems with the systems used by European colonizers elsewhere on the African continent¹⁰.

For Menilik II, like European colonizers in Africa, economic motives were a major element in his expansion objectives. The newly conquered territories and people contributed huge revenues to his government. During his reign a central treasury

⁹ Kjetil Tronvoll, *Ethiopia: A New Start? An MRG International Report* (London: MRG 2002), 12.

¹⁰ Ojulu 36-39

department and taxation system were developed to facilitate taxation from the newly conquered territories. Furthermore, fortified towns were built throughout the newly conquered territories to serve both as administrative and military centers for the central government. In these towns and elsewhere in rural outposts, Amhara officials and military were deployed to represent the central government's presence, and to discourage rebellion among the conquered communities. All these Amhara officials and military were allocated a number of local farmers to provide them with services and products.¹¹

Thus, the motives for expansion and the introduction of these systems support the colonial paradigm thesis in many ways.¹² First of all, like European colonization, the Abyssinian expansion included subjugation and exploitation of the southern, western and eastern peoples. Secondly, the arrival of the Abyssinian conquerors led to fatal conflicts in many areas, as they applied brutal methods to pacify groups that showed resistance. Moreover, as Harold Marcus describes it, the Christian Amhara of the north looked at the southerners as primitive people without culture or effective government, naked or dressed in skins, and heathens who needed the word of God. In this way, the Abyssinian conquest of western and southern Ethiopia was similar to traditional European colonization in that it legitimized colonization with a "civilizing" objective. Additionally, the settler policy of the northern Christian Amhara people was perceived as beneficial to the marginalized

¹¹ Tronvoll, 12.

¹² The so-called 'colonial paradigm thesis' within Ethiopian history claims that the current Ethiopian state is a colonial state created through colonization of many independent nations that were conquered and occupied by various Abyssinian kingdoms. Ethiopia as a state is seen as an artificial invention in line with the European colonies elsewhere in Africa, where the northerners acted like European colonial settlers, with the aim of exploiting the human and material resources of the new-won territories. For more information see Bonnie K. Holcomb and Ibssa, Sisai, *The Invention of Ethiopia: The Making of a Dependent Colonial State in Northeast Africa* (New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 1990).

minority communities because it introduced them to a purportedly “superior” Amhara culture and taught them Christianity. And the presence of representatives of the central government was seen as an advantage for the minorities as it facilitated opportunities for local entrepreneurs and leaders to enter national political life through acculturation.¹³

Therefore, although it is beyond the scope of this study to present a detailed comparative analysis of the Abyssinian conquerors and European colonizers, there seems to be strong evidence in favor of the ethnic-nationalist historians who explain the evolution of the contemporary Ethiopian state as a colonial-state rather than a nation-state. After a series of events, Emperor Haile Sellassie emerged as the “King of Kings” and “Lion of Judah” in 1928. He centralized the state and expanded Ethiopia's civil society. He fostered unity through the mobilization of a national army, a modern infrastructure and communications, and a pan-Ethiopian economy.¹⁴ However, the economic benefits hardly reached the peasantry and working classes. This contributed to the pro-Marxist military coup that overthrew the emperor in 1974, which brought to an end the history of monarchy in Ethiopia.¹⁵

This paved the way for the government of Mengistu Haile-Mariam (1974-1991). Mengistu’s administration, rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology and politics, set out to create a socialist state for the benefit of the majority of Ethiopians. Though the intentions were noble, the system was foreign to Ethiopian society. Mass political organizations, villagization, resettlement, and the command economy alienated people from their natural

¹³ Marcus, Harold, *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913* (Lawrenceville, Germany: Red Sea Press, 1995), 67.

¹⁴ Ben Parker, *Ethiopia: Breaking New Ground* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1995), 11.

¹⁵ F. Halliday and M. Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (Working, Germany: Urvin Brothers, 1981), 70.

environment, alliances and allegiances. Also, the de-emphasis of religion, in a country rooted in religion, further aggravated instability in the country. Ruthless suppression of ideological adversaries fostered nationalist movements. In 1991, Mengistu's government was overthrown by rebel forces led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).¹⁶

Brief Introduction to Gambella Regional State

The Gambella People's National and Regional State (GPNRS), is located in southwestern Ethiopia along the border with South Sudan. Its population is 228,000.¹⁷ Gambella is 777 kilometers from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Gambella is a very remote place. What happens there is very difficult to make known to the world unless the local government favors it because the media is under the control of the local administrative bodies. But it is different these days. The researcher thanks God for technology. Today almost every adult living in Gambella has a cell phone.

Even though today's technology makes communication easier around the world, the indigenous people of Gambella may not know the historical tragedies or atrocities that have been committed against other groups of people around the world. They may not know about what happened to the Jewish people at the hands of Nazi Germany, the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and Cambodia, Apartheid in South Africa, and the tribal massacre in Rwanda. The researcher believes that probably only educated people of Gambella know about such atrocities committed against other ethnic groups.

¹⁶ Aalen Lovise, *Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience: 1991-2000* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: CMI Reports, 2002), 6.

¹⁷ Central Statistics Authority, Results for Gambella Region, *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1995).

The researcher thinks that many people of Gambella will read this paper. He wants them to learn from the stories of genocide, ethnic cleansing and so forth from other groups of people that were massacred like them, and he hopes that his dear people of Gambella will discover the pathways that their future generation can take to walk in freedom and pursue happiness, liberty, equality, and peace in their region. Other people who have been through ethnic cleansing, like them, have gone through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Today they are free from grudges, bitterness, resentments, non-forgiveness, and hatred, and the researcher wants the ethnics groups in Gambella to be freed from hatred and killing each other.

As mentioned above, there are five ethnic-linguistic groups recognized by the current Ethiopian government as the indigenous peoples of the Gambella region: the Anyuwaa, Nuer, Majanger, Kumo, and Opuo. The indigenous peoples of the Gambella region have more in common culturally and linguistically with the larger Nilo-Saharan linguistic family of other African people groups, particularly their neighbors in South Sudan, than with the majority Semitic or Cushite ethnic groups of Ethiopia.

In addition to the indigenous groups, there are other Ethiopian ethnic groups in the region from different parts of the country who are collectively referred to as “highlanders,” as they are from the highland part of the country. Another distinguishing factor between the highlanders and indigenous people is the fact that the highlanders, despite their ethno-linguistic differences, are brown (i.e. lighter in skin color), in contrast to the black indigenous peoples.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ojulu 52-67

Throughout the past two decades, the region has been plunged into various kinds of bloody conflicts: inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, indigenous against migrants, the state against an ethnic group, and cross-border conflicts.¹⁹ These conflicts climaxed on December 13, 2003 as mentioned above, in what Human Rights Watch calls “Crimes against Humanity,” when the Ethiopian military, together with “highlanders,” indiscriminately massacred over 400 indigenous Anyuwaa people in the town of Gambella.²⁰ This alliance between the highlanders and the military unit in Gambella against the indigenous people is an important factor in understanding the current ethnic federalism, especially when it comes to minority regions.

The researcher hopes to make a petition for God’s forgiveness in Gambella. Because the minority regions of Ethiopia have suffered lots of tragic deaths, atrocities, ethnic cleansing, and more, they need to cry to God for mercy, grace and forgiveness. And now the researcher will explain the history of conflicts and causes of hatred in Gambella.

Factors Behind the Conflict in Gambella

In the 1900s, other nationalities started coming to Gambella: Sudanese, Arabian, English, Italian, and American missionaries. Since the Anyuwaa tribe was the ethnic group living in Gambella before other tribes moved in, they have claimed Gambella as their own land. Because of their land ownership claim, they have been trying to resist any tribe, government, and people who wanted to take over their land. The Anyuwaa had a

¹⁹ Dereje Feyissa, *Making Sense of the Conflict Situation in the Gambella Region in National Terms* (Halle, Germany: Max Planck Institute, 2005), 1-22.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Targeting the Anuak: Crimes against Humanity in Ethiopia’s Gambella region*, 2005.

social leadership structure in the form of government that led by kings (Nyeye) and land chiefs (kuweri), and they resisted any government or people who wanted to destroy their governmental system.

As stated above, the largest indigenous groups, the Anyuwaa and Nuer, are both divided by the international border between Ethiopia and South Sudan. They are border people. The Nuer tribe has been attempting to take over the leadership and land of the Anyuwaa tribe for centuries. The Anyuwaa and Nuer tribes have been fighting fiercely because of the Nuer aggressively chasing the Anyuwaa out of their land. Even though the Anyuwaa people have unwillingly given up a lot of land to the Nuer, the Nuers have never given the Anyuwaa rest because they want all the land of the Anyuwaa.

During the 1800s and 1900s, during the British colonization of Sudan, the Nuer of Sudan complained to British leadership that the Anyuwaa were killing them. When the British heard this, they organized a lot of available Nuer men and declared war on the Anyuwaa. They went and fought against the Anyuwaa, but couldn't overpower them. The British leaders went back to their frontier stations and the Nuer to their homes. They went to prepare to come back to attack the Anyuwaa tribe to get rid of them, but the Second World War interrupted their plan. The British soldiers had to go back to England, the Nuers were left by themselves, and the Anyuwaa were spared.

Robert O. Collins writes, "In April 1931 heavy fighting broke out in Ethiopia between the Gaajak Nuer in their dry season grazing grounds and the Anuak."²¹

Majid Abud, a Syrian Druze, proved loyal to Ethiopian Emperor Hale Selassie, and on his orders led an Ethiopian punitive expedition into the Baro Salient in 1916 to

²¹Robert O. Collins *Shadows in the Grass* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 375.

punish the Anyuwaa, who had refused to recognize Ethiopian sovereignty, and to wage guerrilla warfare across the frontier into Sudan. His plan was to wipe out the Anyuwaa from their land and subdue their territory, but he could not defeat the Anyuwaa. Then, the Anyuwaa were spared because of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia.

“In light of the growing Italian threat, King Hale Selassie could hardly spare the troops necessary to disarm the Anyuwaa in a remote region of his empire where there were no Italians. In Addis Ababa, Majid’s proposed expedition against the Gaajak Nuer and the Anyuwaa of the Baro salient was quietly abandoned.”²² Again the Anyuwaa people were spared. Majid Abud did not come back to Gambella to destroy them as he had planned.

The Anyuwaa people were spared from the Nuer, the British, and Hale Selassie's punishment. The communist Junta regime took over Ethiopia in 1974 and settled thousands of southern Sudanese refugees in Gambella. The land of the Anyuwaa became overcrowded with them. The Anyuwaa people did not like this, but they had no choice and no power. They didn’t even know the agenda and plan of the government because they were not disclosed to them.

While the Anyuwaa people were angry at the Ethiopian government for bringing thousands of refugees to their land, it also proposed and approved a project that would displace thousands of people from northern and southern Ethiopia and move them to Gambella. This resettlement program enraged Anyuwaa leaders against the communist

²² Collins, 386

government of Ethiopia because they knew that its agenda was to take over the land of the Anyuwaa.

Moreover, the government administration representatives in Gambella were from the Nuer tribe, which had never gotten along with the Anyuwaa. The Anyuwaa people were enraged over the loss of their properties and political power. They were really upset at the Nuer tribe, the government of Ethiopia, and themselves. They thought that their lives were endangered from many directions. Some of them decided to escape into the bush to rebel against the socialist government of Ethiopia and joined other Ethiopian tribes who had been fighting against the communist government before them. They united with the Tigray tribe and fought together until they overthrew the communist regime together in 1991.

The Anyuwaa came back to their land, Gambella, with new power and a new government. The new government, led by the Tigray Tribe, empowered the Anyuwaa to exercise autonomous leadership in Gambella. They were allowed to develop their own constitution, language, law, culture, policies, militia and so on in their own state and they loved it. The Anyuwaa were very excited and their leadership was revived.

But after the Anyuwaa people had been ruling themselves for a while, their soldiers decided to kill their Anyuwaa governor. Since then, the state of Gambella has been in severe crisis, with insecurity, instability, and tribal conflicts. Killing each other became a daily drama. Thugs and government agents from many ethnic groups took advantage of Gambella's conflict as an opportunity for their own political agendas and self-interests. This tribal conflict reached its climax of hatred and rage when many

highlanders united for the massacre of their fellow Ethiopian citizens, the Anyuwaa, on December 13, 2003.

Because of the massacre of the Anyuwaa people by the military of the current government, the Anyuwaa people lost faith in the ethnic federalist government of Ethiopia. One of the major objectives behind the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia was to control ethnic conflicts and thereby ensure lasting peace in the country. This is clearly reflected in the preamble of the constitution which states that “We, the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social development. . .”²³ According to this statement, the Ethiopian ethnic federalism was formulated to achieve four main objectives: (1) to build a political community, (2) to ensure a lasting peace, (3) to guarantee a democratic order, and (4) to advance economic and social development. While it is a bit premature to conclude whether the system has achieved its objectives or not, the conflicts in Gambella and other minority regional states suggest an inability to achieve them.

In Gambella Regional State, building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing economic and social development, as the government of Ethiopia promised, is still a dream. Because of rivalry among the ethnic groups in Gambella, there is hostility and corruption, which prevent the leaders from governing well, and produce neglect, discrimination, and marginalization. This is made worse by the presence of illiteracy and

²³ FDRE Constitution, 1994.

poor education. The people of Gambella have experienced these stresses and abuses through all the regimes since Menilik, through the communist era to the present.

This is one reason why the researcher is appealing to the indigenous people of Gambella to forgive each other. He is stating that forgiveness is the key to unlock the door to deliverance, healing, freedom, spiritual harmony, love, prosperity and peace in this region of Ethiopia. He wants the rival ethnic groups to come together, forgive each other, and reconcile with each other.

The Major Antagonistic Ethnic Groups in Gambella

The conflict over resources is not only a major issue in Gambella. All over Africa and elsewhere, access to land often has ethnic dimensions, as land use patterns and customary land tenure systems have historically had an ethnic basic, which colonialism institutionalized into the modern states in many parts of Africa. This has led to important issues around citizenship and migration, specifically relating to claims of land ownership. People who claim that they are original inhabitants, “sons of the soil,” are in a dangerous situation these days. “Sons of soil” literally means “emerging from the soil,” implying belonging to a locality, referring to people with a supposedly indisputable historical link to a particular territory.²⁴ This expression has led to violent struggles in Gambella, where Anyuwaa assertion of land ownership is used to justify land claims.

The centrality of land for the communities of Gambella cannot be downplayed. In Ethiopia, the land issue remains overwhelmingly controversial because of its agricultural benefits. Land continues to lie at the heart of social, economic, and political life in most

²⁴ Morten Boas and Kevin Dunn, *Politics of Origin in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 8.

of Ethiopia and Africa. There also remains a lack of clarity regarding property rights in Gambella, and the land tenure continues to be deeply contested in much of the country. Land remains important not only for farming purposes but also as a speculative asset. As such, it is a highly political, and politicized, resource. This is why the Anyuwaa ethnic group is in danger of ethnic cleansing at the hands of past and present governments of Ethiopia and other tribes who want to claim ownership of the land of Gambella. The researcher cries to God for all indigenous people of Gambella. He wants them to know that the land of Gambella belongs to all of them, not only the Anyuwaa.

Anyuwaa

Different writers spell the name of this people group differently: Anyuak, Anuak, or Agnwak. However, the people call themselves Anyuwaa, the designation that the researcher prefers to use in this project.²⁵ The Anyuwaa are traditionally agrarian people whose villages are scattered on the banks of four major rivers in Gambella known as Openo/Baro, Alwero, Gilo and Akobo. Unlike other Nilotic peoples in the region, whose economy is centered on raising cattle, the Anyuwaa are farmers who grow sorghum, corn, beans and tobacco.²⁶ The four rivers provide the Anyuwaa with plenty of fish and they occasionally practice hunting.

²⁵ For instance, Robert O. Collins uses “Anuak” in his *History of the Anuak to 1956* New Haven, CT: Yale press, http://www.anuakjustice.org/doc_history_to_1956.htm. So does Anyuak Media, <http://www.anyuakmedia.com/>. Others including Kurimoto Eisei, Monika Sommer, and Dereje Feyissa use “Anyuwaa.”

²⁶ Monika M. Sommer, *Transforming Conflict in the Multi-ethnic State of Gambella in Ethiopia: Mediation in a Divided Society* Germany Institute Universities Kurt Bösch, 2005), 18.

According to the 1994 national census, the Anyuwaa population is 45,665. This is 27% of the Gambella Regional State population and only 0.09% of the total Ethiopian population.²⁷ However, other sources put the number of the Anyuwaa, including those living in South Sudan, in the range of 100,000 to 150,000.²⁸

Traditionally, the agrarian Anyuwaa had developed a more centralized political system consisting of village states headed by either a Nyeya (king) or Kwaaro (headman) as mentioned above. The king or the headman took care of all the affairs of village life, from food production to conflict resolution, through different structures, ensuring security for villagers by maintaining peaceful relations with neighboring villages or ethnic groups. In case of any aggressive attack from a neighboring village or ethnic group, the king or headmen had to mobilize the villagers for defense or attack as needed.²⁹

Nuer

The Nuer are the second largest ethnic group in South Sudan. According to the 1994 Ethiopian census, they make up 40% of the population in the Gambella Regional State, but this is disputed due to the open border between Gambella and South Sudan.³⁰

²⁷ The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Results for Gambella Region (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Central Statistical Authority, 2005), 42.

²⁸ Anyuak Justice Council, accessed August 1, 2008, http://www.anuakjustice.org/history_brief.htm.

²⁹ Tewodros Zewde, *Traditional Institutions of Governance & Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: A Case Study of Majangir, Anyuwaa & Nuer of Gambella* (Gambella, Ethiopia: ACORD, 2007), 23.

³⁰ The majority of the Nuer who live on the Ethiopian side of the border are from the Gajaak clan which is divided into five sub-clans known as the Thiang, Cieng Cany, Cieng Wau, Cieng Nyajani, and Cieng Reng.

The Nuer economy largely relies on cattle herding. They also practice limited cultivation. As pastoralists, their way of life is characterized by movement with their cattle between Ethiopia and Sudan during different seasons of the year. Gradually, in the second half of the 20th century, due to ethnic conflicts with the Dinka in Sudan, and later the outbreak of civil war between southern and northern Sudan, the Nuer began to settle permanently in Gambella, predominantly in Anyuwaa areas.³¹ Currently, the Nuers control four of the twelve districts in the Gambella regional state.

According to Monika Sommer, Nuer political organization and structure could be categorized as a confederation of independent and autonomous sections and clans. Each clan has its own elected leader. Below the clan structure, the sub-clans also have chiefs and sub-chiefs elected on various justifications. In some instances, magicians play leadership roles in Nuer society. They are believed to foresee future events and to have power over individuals' and the community's fate either for good or bad. At times of inter-clan or inter-ethnic wars, magicians can be consulted.³²

Highlanders

As explained above, the term "highlanders" in the context of Gambella refers to Ethiopians other than the indigenous ethnic groups of Gambella. These primarily include people of Oromo, Amhara, Tigre, Kambata, Guragie, and Adiya ethnic origin. Most highlanders moved into the region for job opportunities and private businesses. Under the DERG/Mengistu communist regime's resettlement program, over 60,000 highlanders

³¹ John Young, "Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier, Gambella and Beneshangul in Transition," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37 (1999): 321-346.

³² Zewde, *Traditional Institutions*, 36.

were brought to Gambella from overpopulated and infertile areas of the northern and southern parts of the country.³³ These highlanders live in rural areas of Gambella as cultivators but most of them went back to their respective regions after the fall of the DERG regime. Together, highlanders comprise 25% of the total population of Gambella, making them the third largest group in the region.³⁴

The main identity marker between the highlanders and the indigenous peoples of Gambella is the difference in skin color. Highlanders are “brown” in skin color unlike the “black” indigenous people of Gambella. Although highlanders do not have political representation in the regional government, they play a major role through their social network with relatives in the central government in Addis Ababa, and with the central government appointed advisors in Gambella. Besides their ties to the central government, the highlanders fully dominate the commercial sector and regional civil service positions. Moreover, the fact that the army unit in Gambella identifies itself with the highlander groups makes the highlanders the most powerful group in the region, which is one of the main causes of conflict in Gambella.

The researcher wants to make clear that ethnic division in Gambella is one of the strong, core causes of the conflicts. Residents need to ask God to bring them into unity and love so that the power of division will be broken.

³³ Kurimoto Eisei, “People of the River: Subsistence Economy of the Anyuwa (Anuak) of Western Ethiopia,” in *Essays in Northeast African Studies*, Senri Ethnological Studies no. 43, ed. Shun Sato and Eisei Kurimoto (Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 1997), 72.

³⁴ The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Results for Gambella Region (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Central Statistical Authority, 2005), 1.

Root Causes of Gambella's Conflicts

Since 1991, Gambella has witnessed various kinds of conflict among different groups. For the sake of this project, this section discusses only the Anyuwaa-Nuer and the indigenous-highlanders conflicts, which in the researcher's judgment are most relevant to the subject under discussion – the impact of ethnic federalism on minority groups, which can be released only by the mercy of God's forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and restoration among highlanders, Anyuwaa, and Nuer.

Anyuwaa versus Nuer

The Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict is the most prominent and protracted of all conflicts in the region. Its historical roots can be traced back to the eastward migration of the Jikany-Nuer group in the second half of the 19th century from Sudan. This eastward migration of the Nuer from South Sudan to Ethiopia, in search for access to and control over vital natural resources such as pasture land and water, was accomplished at the expense of the Dinka and Anyuwaa territories. According to Matt Kelly, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Nuer had already expanded their territory fourfold. The twentieth century began with a major Nuer encroachment into Anyuwaa land that was the genesis of the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict.³⁵ Initially, the Nuer settlers would ask the permission of an Anyuwaa chief to give them land for a short period of time. Then the settlers would attract relatives and politely ask their Anyuwaa friends to allow the newcomers to stay for

³⁵ Dereje Feyissa, *Making Sense of the Conflict*, 2.

some time. The newcomers also invited relatives and it went on and on. Gradually, this movement of the Nuer resulted in territorial and demographic expansion.

Traditionally, a major trigger of the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict is Nuer cattle trespassing into Anyuwaa farmland where the two groups live in neighboring villages. When they were few in number, the Nuer controlled their cattle and in cases of such incidents, they would opt for peaceful means of resolving the matter through an Anyuwaa chief, or compensation to the Anyuwaa farmer whose farm was damaged by Nuer cattle. However, when they grew in number, the Nuer gained confidence, began to allow their cattle to graze on Anyuwaa farmland, and was ready to fight when asked why they were not looking after the cattle.³⁶ Moreover, the Nuer changed from their peaceful strategy of acquiring land from the Anyuwaa by becoming more aggressive and violent in search for more land. The Anyuwaa, thanks to their earlier acquisition of firearms from highlanders, managed in the first three decades of the 20th century to not only contain Nuer territorial expansion but also launch counter-offensives against them to recover lost territory. But later, the Nuer began to be involved in the ivory-for-firearms trade, and in due course reached a military balance with the Anyuwaa. This in turn led to the stabilization of relations and inter-ethnic exchanges. Thus, confrontation based on a balance of power gradually gave way to socio-economic cooperation.³⁷ Since then, the Anyuwaa and Nuer have lived in a relatively harmonious relationship based on cooperation, though small scale skirmishes and occasional cattle raiding incidents from both sides have occurred.

³⁶ Medhane Tadesse, *Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security* (Pretoria, South Africa: Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue, 2006), 6.

³⁷ Tadesse, *Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict*, 7.

Nevertheless, the escalation of the Sudanese civil war in the 1980s, the influx of hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese refugees into the Gambella region in those years, and political developments in Ethiopia during the next decade changed relations between the Anyuwaa and Nuer from cooperative to competitive and to violent conflicts. So, since 1991, though with some interruptions, the Anyuwaa and Nuer have been caught up in violent conflicts.

The first bloody conflict occurred from 1991 to 1992, right after the fall of the DERG regime. During the DERG era, many Nuers were encouraged to settle in Anyuwaa land and the DERG appointed Nuer people to both of the two senior political positions in the region namely, party secretary and regional administrator.³⁸ This was to discourage and punish the Anyuwaa, who by then had formed a liberation movement known as the GPLM (Gambella Peoples Liberation Movement) and were engaged in fighting the DERG with other ethnic-based liberation movements across the country. The appointed Nuer officials made use of this opportunity to advance not only their quest for more Anyuwaa land, but also political domination over the region. They formed an alliance with the SPLA (Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, composed mostly of Nuer from Sudan) against the Anyuwaa farmers and residents. As a result, in the second half of the 1980s, the SPLA carried out a number of massacres and destroyed Anyuwaa villages such as Pinyudo and Itang, in both of which the Nuer controlled the local government.

³⁸ For instance, at the beginning of 1980 there was only one Nuer family in the city of Gambella, and someone from that family was later appointed by the DERG as party secretary.

The national government of Mengistu took no action to prevent the massacres or bring the perpetrators to justice.³⁹

With the 1991 regime change, the balance of power shifted to the Anyuwaa as the GPLM took control of Gambella. Fearing retaliation, the DERG Nuer officials rambled to southern Sudan with SPLA forces and Nuer refugees from Gambella refugee camps. From their base in Sudan, a group of armed Nuer, together with the SPLA, mounted a counter offensive, which resulted in the destruction of many Anyuwaa villages along the border.⁴⁰ Thus, the early 1990s were characterized by bloody conflicts between the armed Anyuwaa forces in Ethiopia and armed Nuer forces from Sudan. Toward the end of 1992, many Nuer officials returned to Gambella and were incorporated in the new regional government of Gambella with an Anyuwaa president, a Nuer vice president, and a Majangir as secretary of the regional state.

Another large-scale conflict between the Anyuwaa and Nuer took place between 1998 and 2002. In this case many causes related to the new system of ethnic federalism could be identified, including the question of language policy (which language should be taught in which school), which district belonged to whom, representation in the regional government, and others. In the new system, representation in the regional government was based on districts – the more districts, the more representatives and seats in the regional government. This favored the Anyuwaa, who by that time owned 6 districts out of the nine in the region. In addition, the Anyuwaa legitimized their dominant political

³⁹ Douglas Johnson, "The Nuer Civil War," in *Sudanese Society in the Context of Civil War*, ed. (Copenhagen, Denmark: University of Copenhagen, 2001)17

⁴⁰ Feyissa, *Making Sense of the Conflict*, 3.

status on the basis of settlement history (ownership of Gambella) and contribution to the regime change. In order to widen their participation in the new political process, the Nuer established a political party called the GPDUP (Gambella People's Democratic Unity Party). The first counter-strategy of the Nuer was to deconstruct the Anyuwaa claim of being indigenous by invoking a longer historical frame of reference, their shared Nilotic origin in southern Sudan, and arguing that both of them had migrated from southern Sudan, no matter who came first.⁴¹

In 1994, the national census provided a new political instrument for the Nuer as they appeared to be numerically larger than the Anyuwaa (Nuer 40%, Anyuwaa 27%). Overnight the Nuer political elite changed their argument to democracy-cum-majority rule. In 1995, their argument was supported by the federal government and they were given more seats in the regional government. This eroded the GPLM trust in their ally, the EPRDF. Similarly, Anyuwaa political elites were becoming disenchanted with the federal government and how the new ethnic federalism was being implemented. The Nuer political elites on their part saw this deterioration of the relationship between the former allies (GPLM and EPRDF) as a window of opportunity that they had to capture.

By showing themselves to be more loyal to the federal government and its advisors, and by promoting the interest of highlanders in the region, the Nuer political elites won the favor of the federal government over the Anyuwaa political elites, who were seen by the federal government as disloyal. Again the power shifted to the Nuer as the federal government turned against the Anyuwaa leaders, dissolved the GPLM, and imprisoned many Anyuwaa community elders for being "narrow-nationalists." In 1998,

⁴¹ Dereje Feyissa, *Conflict and Identity Politics: The Case of Anyuwaa-Nuer Relations in the Gambella*, (Halle, Germany: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2003), 13.

the Nuer launched fresh attacks on Anyuwaa villages and took over 12 of them. In 2000, they managed to take over the district town of Itang after killing over 80 Anyuwaa civilians and police officers. Unlike the past, when conflict over land was mainly for grazing and water, this time taking more Anyuwaa land also meant more power and representation for the Nuer at the regional government level.⁴² The federal government intervened by imprisoning the Itang Anyuwaa district officials and surviving policemen. This marked the beginning of another phase of conflict in the region, between the indigenous people, mainly the Anyuwaa, and the highlanders/central government.

Indigenous People versus Highlanders and Central Government

Another level of conflict in the Gambella Regional State is between indigenous people and highlanders. As mentioned above, the association of the highlanders with the army and the federal government means that any conflict between indigenous people and highlanders also involves the central government. In the eyes of the indigenous people, highlanders are the same as the federal government and vice versa. In fact, the indigenous people use the same word to refer to the Ethiopian state and the highlanders as people. This is why conflict between the indigenous people and the federal government often extends to tensions between the indigenous and the highlanders.

One factor in the indigenous-highlanders conflict is the highlanders' monopoly on the business sector in the region. Thanks to their better social network with the central government and long experience in business, highlanders have proven to be more successful and progressive in the business sector in the region. But this does not seem to

⁴² Tadesse, *Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict*, 12.

be the only reason for the highlanders' dominance in business. Both the government and the army have played a great role in protecting the interests of the highlanders while suppressing the few indigenous people trying to enter the business sector. Some indigenous people who live in diaspora have tried to invest in their hometown in Gambella in the transport sector, hotels, agriculture and other areas. But after a while, their assets were confiscated by the military and many of them were imprisoned and branded as supporters of anti-peace forces.⁴³ The highlander businessmen took advantage of this to conspire against any indigenous people whom they perceive as a business competitor.⁴⁴ This has triggered conflicts between the indigenous people and highlanders, which as always has extended to the army supporting the highlanders, resulting in more casualties on the indigenous side.

Another cause of conflict between the indigenous people and highlanders is the paradoxical position of the highlanders in regional politics. On one hand, the highlanders are formally, constitutionally excluded from regional politics. According to the regional constitution, Gambella belongs to the indigenous people. The preamble of the Gambella Peoples National and Regional State constitution, echoing the country's constitution, starts with, "We the nationalities and peoples of the Gambella regional state," exclusively referring only to the five indigenous groups. On the other hand, the highlanders are

⁴³ "Anti-peace forces" is a term used by the Ethiopian government to refer to armed liberation movement fighters like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

⁴⁴ For example, a track owned by Anyuwaa businessmen was taken by the military due to what many Anyuwaa see as a conspiracy of highlander track owners, and Anyuwaa grinding mills, including a community mill in the Gog district, were destroyed by the military due to what the Anyuwaa see as a conspiracy of highlanders who own grinding mills in the region.

connected with higher levels of power, the federal government and the army, turning them into “significant others” in regional politics.

For the indigenous people who are caught up in the conflict over regional political power and resources, alliance with highlanders means more support from the federal government and the army. This is the strategy that the Nuer political elites employed to win the support of the federal government in their quest for more Anyuwaa land and power in regional politics. This strategy seems to have worked out well for them. In 2003, in the name of restructuring, the government merged four Anyuwaa districts and later increased the two Nuer districts into four, giving them more representation in the regional government.⁴⁵ This in turn changed the conflict map from indigenous versus highlanders, to a specifically Anyuwaa versus highlander and federal government conflict.

As consequences of the merging of districts and the Anyuwaa-Nuer conflict in Itang, many Anyuwaa government employees and police officers have been dismissed from their jobs. A few of these police officers have not been able to sustain their families, and claiming to represent Anyuwaa discontent, resorted to violence against not only the government establishment, but also highlanders. This is because the Anyuwaa believed that all the actions the central government had taken against them, and the continued encroachment of the armed Nuer group into their land, was a result of a highlander conspiracy. On December 13, 2003, as mentioned many times, the city of Gambella witnessed an extreme form of violence that some human rights organizations such as

⁴⁵ This restructuring, which resulted in the dismissal of many people, including police officers, took place only in predominantly Anyuwaa districts.

Genocide Watch call “Genocide”⁴⁶ and Human Rights Watch calls “Crimes against Humanity.”⁴⁷

The trigger was the killing of eight highlander government officials travelling from the city of Gambella to Itang. Without an investigation of who had carried out the killing, highlander military officials immediately disarmed all local police officers and blamed the killing on Anyuwaa bandits. In order to mobilize the highlanders, the military displayed the bodies of the eight officials to the public. On the same day, the military and highlanders indiscriminately marched against Anyuwaa residents of the town of Gambella, the civilian highlanders with machetes, pangs and stones, and the military shooting and bombing sturdy Anyuwaa houses. According to Human Rights Watch, over 424 Anyuwaa people perished from December 13 to 15, 2003.⁴⁸ Since then, a cycle of revenge killings have characterized the relationship between the Anyuwaa on one side and the highlanders and the Ethiopian state on the other.

The existing political tension between the Anyuwaa and the Ethiopian state is further compounded by the prospect of the discovery of oil in the Gambella region. The Gambella basin is one of five potential petroleum areas in Ethiopia.⁴⁹ Currently, the

⁴⁶ Genocide Watch and Survivor’s Rights International, *Today is the Day of Killing Anyuak: Crimes against Humanity, Acts of Genocide and Ongoing Atrocities against the Anyuak People of Southwest Ethiopia*, accessed 2004, <http://www.survivorrightsinternational.org/pdfs/ANUAKREP.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia, *Targeting the Anuak: Human Rights Violations and Crimes against Humanity in Ethiopia’s Gambella Region*, accessed July 28, 2008, <http://hrw.org/reports/2005/ethioia0305/>.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Targeting the Anuak*.

⁴⁹ The Gambella basin is near the oil-rich Melut basin of South Sudan. It is to be noted that Sudan has been one of the leading African oil producing countries since 2000. In 2005, Sudan produced 500,000 barrels per day. Esther Pan, 2007. China, Africa and Oil, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557>) (Accessed in, July 2008).

Malaysian oil company PETRONAS, subcontracted by the Chinese, is undertaking an exploration of the entire basin. This is largely a bilateral affair between the oil company and the Federal Ministry of Mines and Energy. According to the Constitution, the federal and regional states jointly share the royalties from petroleum and mining exploitation. Article 100/3 of the Constitution (Concurrent Taxation Powers) specifies that “the Federal State and the Federal government jointly levy and collect income tax and royalties on big mining, petroleum and gas operations.”⁵⁰ Because most of the major potential oil sites are in Anyuwa territories, the Anyuwa believe that what took place on December 13, 2003 and the aftermath was a culmination of the genocide project of the Ethiopian state towards the Anyuwa because of the oil.

In all, the failure of the federal government to play a fair, mediating role and address the legitimate political demands of the various groups in the region could be identified as one of the major reasons for the prolonged conflict there. Above all, it is to be noted that the conflict in the Gambella region, to a larger extent, is an extension of the political struggle for more control over different Ethiopian regions between the Oromo, the Amhara and the Tigre. These three big groups have assimilated minority ethnic groups living within their regional territories and are struggling to extend their control over constitutionally established minority regions such as Beneshangul-Gumuz and Gambella through migration and resettlement programs. In Beneshangul-Gumuz, the Amhara residing in the region, backed by Amhara political elites at the federal level, have already consolidated their control over the region to the extent of not only outnumbering the local people in civil service positions but also in the key regional political positions.

⁵⁰ FDRE Constitution, art. 100, sec. 3.

This is what the Tigre and Oromo, including the Amhara, want to replicate in Gambella. They know that sooner or later the highlanders will outnumber the indigenous people in Gambella. Then the question and object of struggle among these groups is who from the highlanders will take a hegemonic position in the region? In order to achieve this, these groups create alliances with different indigenous peoples, which always end up with indigenous people fighting one another. Therefore, without denying the local aspect of the conflicts and the power struggles among the indigenous peoples, it must also be acknowledged that another face of the conflicts among indigenous peoples in Gambella is largely an extension of the nationwide power struggle and competing interests among the big ethnic groups namely, the Oromo, the Amhara and the Tigre.

Despite the escalation of different kinds of conflicts in the region, efforts have been made to prevent tensions from exploding into violent conflicts. The most notable is the contribution of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) toward peace building efforts in the region. Different types of CSOs operate in the region at different levels. Yet the researcher of this project believes that the theology of reconciliation, forgiveness, and non-forgiveness is needed in order for Gambella to experience stability, lasting peace and prosperity.⁵¹

The people of Gambella need to understand that conflict is unavoidable. Wherever human beings live together, they will get into conflicts, but after the conflict, they need to forgive each other for the sake of love, peace, unity and regional stability.

⁵¹ Ojulu 56-61

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Review of the Project

In the previous chapter, the historical background of Gambella and the process of Ethiopian leadership incorporating Gambella into Ethiopia's political map and the impact of Ethiopia's imperial and governmental administration on the Gambella region were discussed.

The potential literary resources for this research consisted of four areas related to the title of this thesis project: (1) the nature of forgiveness and unforgiving hearts and spirits, (2) the fundamental history of tribal hatred and conflict among people of various ethnic groups in Gambella, (3) literature appropriate to the Bethel Seminary Doctor of Ministry program, (4) material related to the study of tribal relationships, reconciliation, and unity among people in Gambella.

The researcher also reviewed documents on the historical background of Ethiopia and events that promoted conflict and war among ethnic groups in Gambella. Though this research specifically focused on these groups, it was also necessary for the researcher to review research on other ethnic groups that have experienced genocide, ethnic cleansing and war in order to find common resolutions.

In this chapter, the project description and methodological approach to the research are discussed. The purpose of this research was to analyze the context of the conflicts and find a solution, to identify the origins and find ways or methods to tackle

the problems at their roots, and to explain the key determinants of the conflicts in Gambella, their linkages with political and security issues in Ethiopia and Sudan, and their impact on the regional well-being, peace, security, and prosperity. The researcher has made a petition for God's forgiveness and for reconciling, peacemaking processes as potential resolutions of the conflict in Gambella.

In response to this problem, the researcher has looked deeply into the tribes' backgrounds and found the root factors of the tribal hostility that has boiled among the ethnic groups of Gambella for years. He has found pathways toward forgiveness by learning from what happened in Rwanda and among other ethnic groups. He has found a solid possibility for resolution and breaking the cycle of animosity. In this chapter, the researcher has reported about conducting surveys and interviews for this project, including when, where, how, what was asked, and who participated.

The researcher chose the Gambella region in Ethiopia as the field of research. The project grew out of the mission field work that the researcher carried out from May 2011 to May 2013 in Gambella and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the Ruiru and Dabaab refugee camps in Kenya. The researcher did this research while working and living in Ethiopia as a missionary.

The research was based on the assumption that the solution to the tribal hatred among the ethnic groups in Gambella lies in the forgiveness, unconditional love, and mercy and grace of God, reconciliation with each other, and the restoration of a stable community of diverse tribes. The Anyuwa people need to forgive the highlanders and other tribes who have killed their loved ones.

The researcher hoped to see good government leadership in Gambella. He hoped to see all of the tribes of Gambella working together peacefully, united for the common goal of developing the state of Gambella. He hoped to see them succeed in working together with good leadership and smooth communication between Gambella and the central government in Addis Ababa. He hoped to see understanding and political stability between the tribes of indigenous people and the Ethiopian highlanders who are living among them in Gambella. By what method was the project carried out?

Research Methodology

The researcher used the descriptive method of research for this thesis project. The descriptive method is a procedure of qualitative research in which the researcher gathers information about the present and existing condition of the phenomenon under study. Descriptive inquires, according to Margaret Sandelowski, seek to address the “Who, what, and where of events or experiences, or basic nature and shape” of the population and the phenomenon being studied.¹ This is a process-oriented method that is used to understand, describe, and develop a theory about the life experiences and the circumstances of a particular phenomenon. The descriptive method requires researchers to listen to participants’ stories and observe their environments and the keepsakes and other memorabilia they may have. The tools used to gather data include written studies, case studies, interviews, audio recordings, field notes, and more.

The researcher engaged the descriptive method of research in order to find the actual problems of the ethnic groups residing in Gambella. Through the descriptive

¹ Margaret Sandelowski, Focus on Research Methods: Whatever Happened to Qualitative Description? Research in Nursing and healthy, October 23, 2000

method the researcher found qualitative factors that have contributed to the ethnic conflicts in Gambella.

The techniques of the case study and phenomenology were used in the collection and interpretation of data. The interview questions explored ethnic groups, tribes, widows, individuals and groups of participants in order to understand the broad spectrum of data that would lead to a commendable, accurate conclusion.

The researcher was open-minded, objective, and flexible. The researcher permitted participants to reveal as much as they could as they engaged in discussions in patterns that were comfortable to them. The researcher was respectful of the participants and their stories. He listened carefully during data collection and strove to be objective, not biased, and not judgmental in interpreting and structuring the findings.

The descriptive method requires researchers to be sensitive to the contextual significance of the data provided by participants. The participants were allowed to reveal which contexts and what experiences were significant to them and why. They were permitted to choose the language they felt most comfortable using (English, Amharic, or Anyuwa). The researcher was very sensitive to how the participants interpreted their experiences through their tribal, ethnic, traditional, and cultural lenses.

Additionally, in the descriptive method, the researcher analyzes the resulting data in terms of strengths, weaknesses, similarities, and differences, which are essential to the study. This enables the researcher to propose a theory based on interpretation of the data. He conducted workshops based on this information and assessed the effectiveness of the methods. The researcher described and encoded what was spoken by participants and not what he thought or felt about the data. The first person viewpoint is central to the

phenomenological process. Therefore, interview questions were designed to explore only the experience of the participants. The researcher was sensitive to the issue of forgiveness because all participants had experienced tragic killings in the past. The researcher wanted the reader to hear the voices of the participants and see the data collected.

Participants and Data Collection

To facilitate the gathering of data from the Ethiopian Anyuwaa who fled to Kenya, the researcher chose locations in two countries as his research fields while living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as a missionary: Gambella in Ethiopia, and the Dadaab and Ruiru refugee camps in Kenya. The researcher went to Kenya five times in two years to do ministry and his research project in the refugee camps where Anyuwaa people live. There are three churches in the Dadaab IFO refugee camp and one that the researcher helped plant in the town of Ruiru. He has ministered among refugees with the church leaders in those four churches. In the Dadaab and Ruiru refugee camps, the researcher ministered to over 5,000 Ethiopian Anyuwaa who fled there after the killing of educated Anyuwaa men in the city of Gambella, Ethiopia. He selected 30 team leaders from those churches to minister with as well as doing his research project. They randomly handed out interview questions to those more than 5,000 refugees that he ministered to during a two month period, before and after services on Sundays and at spiritual conferences during the week. From over 5,000 Anyuwaa refugees who were given the interview questions, 1,882 returned answers. The ages of those interviewed ranged from 20 to 40 years, because the Anyuwaa people who fled to Kenya after the murders in Gambella in 2003 were young boys and girls.

After the researcher's first phase of research in the refugee camps in Kenya, he returned to Ethiopia and went to Gambella, where the rival ethnic groups live. In Gambella, the researcher first looked for persons from different ethnic groups who would help him. He found 14 willing to work with him. These were selected by the researcher based on recommendations of other people he knew, churches leaders, and government leaders. After he formed his team of helpers, he began collecting data using in-depth survey questions, interviews, and participants' observations during seminars and workshops conducted between May 2011 and May 2013. The researcher used questionnaires to interview 32 Anyuwaa widows whose husbands were killed in December 2003, 24 other Anyuwaas, 52 Anyuwaa sons and daughters of martyrs, 27 Nuer elders and leaders, and some highlanders: eleven Amharas, 16 from southern Ethiopia, 20 Oromos, nine Tigrayans, and five Majanger. The total number of respondents from different ethnic groups in Gambella was 196.

The researcher conducted qualitative interviews involving in-depth observation, participation, and discussion on forgiveness, revenge or retaliation, reconciliation, and peacemaking agendas with selected participants, including regional government leaders, nonprofit organization leaders, church leaders, tribal leaders, and ethnic community leaders. The interview questions were open-ended, intermediary, and closing. The target group included ordinary people, clan leaders, government officers, widows, and church leaders. The researcher was constantly aware that his motive might be misinterpreted, so was careful to be straightforward about the purposes and scholarly nature of the research. It is not surprising that most respondents agreed to talk, and participated in the workshops and seminars, provided they would remain anonymous. Some of the respondents were

more emotionally involved with their ethnic groups and provided valuable information about the conflict.

The qualitative data included the researcher's notes from recorded interviews, and the researcher took notes during the interviews and organized the data as soon as he had collected what was needed. Once the data was collected, various steps were taken to analyze it. The researcher organized the data, read through the interview notes, and examined the data for relevance. After the researcher read through his notes and interpreted the recorded data, he began writing up the research, and the results and interpretation of the data are reported in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

The Gambella region has seen factional fighting and interethnic violence for the last three decades. There have always been battles among the Anyuwaa, Nuer, Majangir, and highlanders, primarily over power, resources, and socio-cultural and traditional disputes. Historically, resources-based encounters and small-scale conflicts attributed to values embedded in identity and culture have been common in the area. Remarkable however, are changes in the nature and intensity of conflicts over the last three decades. The major defining moments that have transformed the conflict in Gambella were the Sudanese civil wars and the political transformation in Ethiopia in the early 1990s. Both led to the regionalization of the conflict and to some extent seem to have altered the traditional competitions and rivalries into open large-scale regional conflicts.

This study begins with a discussion of the history of Gambella and the context in which it needs to be understood. Significantly, the political tensions in Ethiopia and Sudan always overflow to Gambella. The effect of the civil war in Sudan, the role of the restructured Ethiopian state, issues of identity, citizenship, and rivalry among the local elites over resources, power and ownership are a few factors that the researcher found that affect the stability of the Gambella region.

A conflict, whatever its characteristics, is usually about one of several types of issues. The most common issue that the researcher found in Gambella is control over

resources. These resources are space, money, property, power, prestige, ownership, and food, which may be viewed as non-shareable. If two or more parties seek exclusive possession or use of a resource or given part of it, conflict is apt to occur among them. Other deep-rooted sources of conflict also exist, such as growing pressures arising from overpopulation, environmental degradation, which can lead to mass migration, underdevelopment, and poverty, mainly in underdeveloped countries. In fact, the history of the Gambella region has been shaped by population movements and conflicts caused by ecological factors. The region has been affected by overgrazing, drought and soil erosion. Pushed by prolonged drought, pastoralists and their animals moved into new areas, looking for better pastures and more water with the apparent intention of staying there. With all these causes of conflict in mind, the researcher would like to show readers the questionnaires' findings.

Questionnaire Findings

As mentioned above, the data collection was based on five interview questions and fifteen questionnaires. The five questions were asked only to the Anyuwa people in refugee camps in Kenya and the fifteen questionnaires administered to different ethnic groups in Gambella, Ethiopia. The objectives of the five interview questions and the fifteen questionnaires were the same: to find out how the Anyuwaas were feeling toward the Ethiopian highlanders, whether angry, holding on to non-forgiveness, or forgiving. Do they want revenge? Do they hold on to hatred and bitterness? How long would they hold on to their past hurt and pain? Would they see forgiveness as a solution that can heal their hearts and lead them to freedom and peaceful life?

First Phase Analysis

The researcher and his team administered five interview questions to over 5,000 Anyuwaa refugees in Kenya. The total number of answers returned was 1,882. Here is a step by step, or question by question analysis.

Interview Question 1

Would you forgive the persons who killed your relatives?

Table 1. Forgiveness

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	81	4.3
No	1,801	95.7

As shown in Table 1 above, only 81 out of 1,882 people (4.3%) answered that they would forgive the persons who killed their relatives and 1,801 (95.7%) answered that they would not forgive them. From these responses, the researcher understands that the majority of refugees interviewed were struggling with non-forgiveness. Even though the researcher told them that their lives would be filled with bitterness and pain if they couldn't say, "I forgive my offenders," they were still holding on to not forgiving.

Interview Question 2

What if the offenders come and confess their wrongs done to you and ask you to forgive them, would you forgive them?

Table 2. Forgiveness on the Condition of Confession of Wrongs

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	720	38.3
No	1,162	61.7

Out of 1,882 respondents, 720 (38.3%) responded “Yes,” they would forgive if their offenders confessed their wrongs, and 1,162 (61.7%) responded “No,” they would not. These answers show that the percentage of respondents who did not want to forgive was higher than the percentage that did. Again, the majority of those interviewed would not choose to forgive their offenders. The researcher understands that forgiveness is not the first option for most people whose loved ones have been killed. Most of the refugees interviewed had experienced the tragic death of family members and friends in Gambella when the Ethiopian military and civilians killed educated Anyuwaa men.

Interview Question 3

Do you hate and feel angry at your wrongdoers and offenders?

Table 3. Question about Hatred or Anger

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	1,873	99.5
No	9	0.5

As shown in Table 3, 1,873 people (99.5%) are angry and hate those who have wronged them, and only 9 (0.5%) do not, which is understandable.

Anger is always about injustice, perceived or real. It is an emotional response. The refugees were very angry because of the tragic death of their loved ones. Even though the researcher told them that they do not need to allow anger to come into their hearts to block the way to forgiveness, it was very hard for them to release their anger. Yet the researcher told them that they need healing, the experience of reclaiming peace, joy, goodness, love, and relationships, which those people were missing from within their deepest selves. The researcher told them that healing requires that they treat the cause of their pain rather than simply put on a bandage to protect them from further harm. They need forgiveness to anchor their future lives. Non-forgiveness can ruin their lives because when they can't forgive their offenders, they are depriving themselves of the freedom that only comes from forgiveness.

The researcher understands that hatred, hostility, and anger have taken hold of the hearts of those refugees. He prays that God may help them to forgive. May they learn the way of the Lord Jesus Christ!

When they hurled their insult at Him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:23-25 NIV).

The researcher believes that those refugees needed to be aware of their anger and hatred problem so that they would start working to find a solution to the enemy of their souls. They need to know that anger can cause the angered person to make negative emotional choices if it is not dealt with in time.

Interview Question 4

What do you prefer to do to your wrongdoers and offenders, revenge or forgive?

Table 4. Choice between Revenge and Forgiveness

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Revenge	1,801	95.7
Forgiveness	81	4.3

As shown in Table 4, 81 people (4.3%) affirmed forgiving hearts, but 1,801 (95.7%) chose revenge. Those who chose revenge might think it is sweet and can be a solution, but it can only give temporary relief from pain and is not a permanent solution.

Interview Question 5

If someone threw a bomb at you to kill you but you caught it before it exploded, what would you do? Would you throw it back at that person or throw it away?

Table 5. Illustration of Bomb for Revenge or Forgiveness

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Throw it away	81	4.3
Throw it at the person	1,801	95.7

As shown in Table 5 above, 81 people (4.3%) answered that they would throw the bomb away instead of throwing it back to try to kill the person. This indicates that only 4.3% would not seek revenge. 1,801 people (95.7%) would avenge themselves by throwing a bomb back at a person who tried to kill them.

The researcher has learned that traumatized people like those Anyuwaa in the refugee camps imagine that revenge would bring relief, even though it simply reverses the roles of perpetrator and victim, continuing to imprison the victim in horror, degradation, and the bonds of the perpetrator's violence. By seeking to lower the perpetrator in response to his or her infliction of injury, does the victim ever master the violence or instead become its fool? Permanent satisfaction never comes by revenge. People should avoid hatred and revenge because avenging oneself can be too costly emotionally, by stoking consuming fires of hatred.

After the researcher did the first phase of analysis at the refugee camps in Kenya, he went to Gambella, Ethiopia for the second phase of analysis.

Second Phase Analysis

The second phase of analysis was done in Gambella and based mainly on interviews of selected individuals, with questionnaires given to leaders of different ethnic groups, Anyuwaa widows, and church leaders, as mentioned above. There were 196 leaders and elders from different ethnic groups. This survey was to collect data about the tribes in Gambella. The researcher designed the questionnaires to accurately address factors that might affect the lives of the tribes and ethnic groups there. Since different ethnic groups have been killing each other for a long time and now still live together in Gambella, the researcher wanted to find out if they have forgiven each other and are not wanting revenge, not holding grudges toward each other, and not angry with each other.

The survey contained 15 questions, each with five possible responses: strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. It was a helpful instrument because it measured what the researcher specifically sought to understand and gather

from the data. The findings begin with the demographic distribution in the Gambella region that show the population of the ethnic groups who live in the town and rural areas.

For various reasons, the populations of other tribes from different part of Ethiopia have increased. The consequences of this was evident in the census of 1994, according to which the Nuer made up 40 percent of Gambella's population, the Anyuwaa 27 percent, the Majanger six percent, and the Koumu and Opuo, taken together, three percent. The same census identified that 24 percent of Gambella's population were highlanders.

It is important to report the number and population of the ethnic groups that have been living in Gambella to show which are in the majority. This is recorded in Table 6.

Table 6. Demographic Distributions in the Gambella Region ¹

	Urban	Percent of Urban	Rural	Percent of Rural	Total	Percent of Total
Anyuwaa	9,831	36%	34,750	26%	44,581	27%
Nuer	3,014	11%	61,459	45%	64,473	40%
Majanger	64	0%	9,286	7%	9,350	6%
People from various highland areas of Ethiopia						
Amharas	4,639	17%	7,927	6%	12,566	8%
SNNPR	1,334	5%	12,170	9%	13,504	8%
Oromos	5,890	22%	4,635	3%	10,525	6%
Tigrayans	1,341	5%	1,255	1%	2,596	2%
"Other Tribes"						
Opuos and Komos	1,067	4%	3,735	3%	4,802	3%
Total	27,180	100%	13,5217	100%	162,397	100%

¹ Source: Housing and Population Census, 1994

The questionnaires for the thesis project were given to the ethnic groups in order to assess forgiveness, revenge, non-forgiveness, and anger. The assessments were given to the participants during workshops and seminars. Unlike the interview questions that the researcher had asked in the refugee camps in Kenya, where only the Anyuwaa ethnic group participated, in Gambella, the researcher gave the survey questions to people from different ethnic groups.

All of the surveys returned were coded with identification numbers for cross-referencing. Survey responses were then recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with numerical codes assigned: 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for undecided, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree. The survey asked for the respondents' tribes, ethnicities, religious affiliations, and gender. Even though the researcher asked the respondents' gender, during workshops, seminars, and interviews, he purposely separated men from women as the traditional setting required and because he wanted to survey them separately according to their genders. The questionnaires are in the appendices.

After the researcher recoded the data and kept the soft and the hard copies, he returned to Minnesota and visited St. Cloud State University, where he went to the Integrated Science and Engineering Laboratory Facility (ISELF) and they statistically ran the data for him.

It is helpful to provide a framework for the findings by describing the study setting of each of the five groups and the change initiatives that served as the basis of the exploration of the results of the changes at their sites. The findings data begins with the Anyuwaa ethnic group, shown in the table below.

Table 7. Results of the Survey Questions

	Number Surveyed	Forgiveness Percentage	Revenge Percentage	Non- forgiveness Percentage	Anger Percentage
Anyuwaa widows	32	17%	97%	83%	91%
Anyuwaa individuals	24	13%	90%	87%	91%
Anyuwaa sons and daughters of martyrs	52	8%	95%	92%	98%
Nuers	27	84%	50%	16%	41%
Highlanders:					
Amharas	11	90%	44%	10%	43%
Southern Ethiopians	16	87%	32%	13%	40%
Oromos	20	70%	83%	30%	77%
Tigrayans	9	93%	33%	7%	23%
Majanger	5	97%	20%	3%	20%
Total	196	100%	100%	100%	100%

As mentioned above, there were fifteen survey questions. Four asked about forgiveness, four about revenge, four about non-forgiveness, and three about anger. The first group surveyed was composed of Anyuwaa widows. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 17%, revenge 97%, non-forgiveness 83%, and anger 91%. This means that the widows were in the hostile stage. They were mostly more vengeful and angry than non-forgiving. The researcher conducted this survey in person as a participant observer. It was given according to ethnic group in classroom group settings. Sometimes

the questionnaires were given after workshops or seminars on forgiveness, non-forgiveness, revenge, and anger.

The second group surveyed was composed of Anyuwaa individuals who participated in the workshops. As shown in Table 7, the result of this survey was: forgiveness 13%, revenge 90%, non-forgiveness 87%, and anger 91%. This indicates that they were still in bad shape. They were more angry, vengeful, and non-forgiving of their wrongdoers and offenders. They held on to grudges, bitterness, resentment, and hatred toward Ethiopian highlanders who murdered their husbands and relatives.

The third group surveyed was composed of Anyuwaa sons and daughters whose fathers were massacred by Ethiopian highlanders. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 8%, revenge 95%, non-forgiveness 92%, and anger 98%. This indicates that the Anyuwaa are very angry. They don't want to forgive their offenders and they want to avenge themselves. The Anyuwaa elites are very unhappy because they perceive the continued presence of Ethiopian highlanders as a threat, and fear being squeezed from different directions by two forces (the Nuer and the highlanders).

The fourth group surveyed was composed of people from the Nuer ethnic group. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 84%, revenge 50%, non-forgiveness 16%, and anger 41%. This means that they want to forgive their offenders. However, one Anyuwaa man told the researcher that the Nuer people are polite, humble and forgiving not because they are good to the Anyuwaa people, but they humble themselves because they want to assimilate the Anyuwaa tribe into the Nuer as they previously did to the Anyuwaa people of Akobo, South Sudan.

The fifth group surveyed was composed of people from the Amhara ethnic group. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 90%, revenge 44%, non-forgiveness 10%, and anger 43%. They are forgiving, but 43% are angry and 44% want to avenge. Maybe they want to fight with Tigrayans over political power. Because these two tribes have been the rulers of Ethiopia for centuries, they have been fighting over the leadership of Ethiopia.

The sixth group surveyed was composed of people from southern Ethiopia. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 87%, revenge 32%, non-forgiveness 13%, and anger 40%. This shows that they are forgiving, but 40% angry. These people know that the Anyuwa people are not very happy about their presence in Gambella since the DERG socialist regime brought them there in order to assimilate the indigenous people of Gambella.

The seventh group surveyed was composed of people from the Oromo ethnic group. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 70%, revenge 83%, non-forgiveness 30%, and anger 77%. It is understandable that these people are angry at Amharas and Tigrayans, who have been their rulers for thousands of years. They have tried to avenge themselves many times but since the times of their ancestors, they have not been able to conquer the tigers and lions (Tigrayans and Amharas). It is reasonable for them to feel angry and want to avenge themselves. But they should choose love, which is more powerful than hate.

The eighth group surveyed was composed of people from the Tigrayan ethnic group. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 93%, revenge 33%, non-forgiveness 7%, and anger 23%. This means that the Tigrayans are more forgiving than

other ethnicities, but 23% are angry and 33% want revenge. This may be because they know that many tribes are against them at this time because of their turn at leadership in Ethiopia.

The ninth group surveyed was composed of people from the Majanger ethnic group. This group was the smallest of all – just five people. As shown in Table 7, the result was: forgiveness 97%, revenge 20%, non-forgiveness 3%, and anger 20%. According to this, they were the most forgiving people – maybe because they were few.

All tribes of Gambella, Ethiopia need to be encouraged to pursue peacemaking with other ethnic groups. Even though the Anyuwaa were the first tribe that came to reside in Gambella, they are not living there alone anymore. The Anyuwaa people need to embrace other ethnic groups and let them live with them in peace and harmony.

As seen in Table 7 above, the Anyuwaa groups were more angry, vengeful, and unwilling to forgive their offenders. They were victims and held on to their pain and hurt. The researcher encouraged them to let the pain of the past hurt and tragedies go, so that they would be free to live their lives again without bitterness, grudges, resentment, and non-forgiveness. They need to work toward reconciliation and restoration of peace.

Again in Gambella the researcher randomly interviewed 300 Anyuwaa people. He used the same question shown in Table 5, “If someone threw a bomb at you to kill you but you caught it before it exploded what you would do? Would you throw it back at the person or throw it away?”

Table 8. Bomb Illustration for Revenge in Gambella

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Throw it away	75	25%
Throw it at the person	225	75%
Total	300	100%

As shown in Table 8, 75 people (25%) would not throw the bomb back at the person who threw it at them. These people can forgive those who wrong them. They would not act vengefully toward them. The other 225 people (75%) answered that they would throw the bomb back at the person who tried to kill them. These people would not forgive those who wrong them.

The purpose of this question was to find out if the interviewees were holding onto grudges, wanting revenge, and unwilling to forgive. The researcher wanted to tell the interviewees that holding onto non-forgiveness in their hearts is like holding a bomb instead of throwing it away. He told them that the power of forgiveness can help the forgiver repel the evil that someone has done to them. He encouraged them not to hold on to the evil things that were thrown at them. He encouraged them to free their hearts by forgiving the persons who hurt them. He told them that forgiveness has healing power. Forgiveness is positive. It is the power of love. Wherever there is love, there is grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Without forgiveness, there is no grace because grace is living forgiveness. Grace is an outcome of forgiveness. Forgiveness has begotten grace. So grace is a living fruit of forgiveness. Christians are saved and living by the grace of God because they are forgiven by their Lord Jesus Christ who died for their sins. Christians

don't deserve the forgiveness of God but receive it because of the unconditional love that Jesus Christ showed to God the Father on the cross of Calvary. He loves them enough to forgive them even though they were not good to Him. So people need to forgive their offenders even though they don't deserve it.

The majority of the Anyuwaa who were asked the question on Table 8 answered that they would throw the bomb back to the person who tried to kill them. Since that person tried to kill them, but by God's grace or luck they caught the bomb, they felt they had to kill their enemy so that he or she could not try again. From their answers, the researcher understood that most of the Anyuwaa interviewed wanted revenge.

The researcher interviewed seven widows who were unfortunately infected with the HIV/ AIDS virus, and whose husbands were murdered by Ethiopian highlanders on December 13, 2003, when over 400 educated Anyuwaa men were massacred in the city of Gambella. He asked them if they could forgive the men who murdered their husbands if they knew them. One of the widows said,

Pastor Omot, why do you think I have to forgive these kinds of people who came from Ethiopia's highland to kill us here? These people came here with their infidels, prostitutes and HIV/AIDS infected women. When they came here with their women, they seduced our husbands into their AIDs emaciated bodies and our ignorant husbands went with them and they infected our husbands. They messed up our lives all together. After this incurable detrimental disease they brought to us, on December 13th 2003, they murdered my husband. Now I am a widow and my children are fatherless. I am an AIDS virus infected victim, living in poverty. Tell me pastor how can I forgive these people who are living with us, we see them every day and they are enjoying living with their families, working in Gambella while they know they murdered my husband? They had never come to me and confessed their wrongs done. Tell me pastor, how can I forgive these unforgiveable people? You know the condition of my children and me. I don't know what to do with my life. I am at a loss.

That widow was very angry at the Ethiopian highlanders who murdered her husband, and the highlander women who transmitted the HIV/AIDS virus to her husband,

which her husband transmitted to her. After she talked to the researcher about the hurts and pain that she had experienced, there was nothing that the researcher could do to assuage her heartache. The researcher understood that the reality of the disease was very painful, eventually causing the death of her husband. She said, “I cannot forgive these people. I am totally loss my trusting in them after their betrayal by making conspiracy against us. Where in the world that your own militaries would join with the civilians to kill their fellow citizens? I don’t know! I heard about Rwanda’s genocide but I did not imagine that it would happen to my own husband? How can I forgive these people?” She was in a fighting mode against the Ethiopian highlanders because she connected the HIV/AIDS and killing of the educated Anyuwaa men to their coming to Gambella.

Being HIV/AIDS positive meant being a negative entity in that society. It was a very painful shame for a person in the community to have HIV/AIDS. That was why that widow was so enraged about the coming of the Ethiopian highlanders to Gambella and their passing the HIV/AIDS virus to the indigenous people there.

On the coming of the Ethiopian highlanders to Gambella, Eisei Kurimoto, who has done considerable research on modern Anyuwaa society, discovered that generally the Anyuwaa see their fate since the DERG Junta regime as a continuous downward spiral of deterioration and degradation. According to Kurimoto, the Anyuwaa believe that the Ethiopian highlanders, (the *gaalas* as the Anyuwaa call them), have only brought “Four Ks” in the Anyuwaa language to their land: Kac (hunger), Kwac (begging), Kap (prostitution), and Kauu (theft).²

² Bethwell A. Ogot, *A History the Luo- speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa*. (Kisumu, Kenya: Anyange Press, 2009)111

The widow that the researcher interviewed challenged him with the negative history attached to the coming of Ethiopians highlanders to Gambella. It was very difficult for the researcher to ask that widow more questions about forgiving her offenders since she knew that he was an Anyuwaa man who was born in Gambella. She made it difficult for him to ask her more questions because she identified him with her husband and other Anyuwaa who were murdered along with him, including Pastor Okwier Oletho, the researcher's father-in-law. She said,

Pastor Omot, don't you believe that those Ethiopian highlanders who murdered would murder you if you were in Gambella on December 13-15, 2003? Now, why do you want me to forgive those people who murdered my innocent husband like dog? Do you want me to forgive those people because you are a man of God? What about Pastor Okwier Oletho who was a faithful man of God? They murdered him around his church. They found him praying in his church where they came and he tried to escape but the mob of many angry Ethiopians highlanders ran after him and cut his neck. Pastor Okwier was a true man of God. He used to pray for many Ethiopian highlanders newcomers to Gambella. He used to teach them the word of God, loved them, and hosted some newcomers who came to Gambella for the first time. Now, don't you know what they had done to our beloved Pastor? Do you really want us to forgive those unforgiveable murderers? Do you know that those who murdered my husband are still living here in Gambella town; do you see how they act? They are still living with us here in Gambella and we hear their bully ridicule talk and prejudices act every day.

The researcher listened attentively to the widow when she spoke with emotion and anger at the Ethiopian highlanders who murdered her husband. When she stopped speaking, the researcher was challenged. Her emotion went deep inside his heart and affected his emotions. He felt her honesty, and he felt compassionate toward her for her genuine hurt and pain. He could not deny her agonized cry for justice to be done for the death of her husband, but she might think that this mistaken Anyuwaa researcher went there to ask her if she would forgive her husband's murderers. She felt odd and awkward as she heard an Anyuwaa man who would have been dead if he had been in Gambella

asks her to forgive the killers of her husband. It was a ridiculous question to her. She could not understand it.

At the moment she spoke to the researcher about his father-in-law, Pastor Okwier Oletho, his mind went back to Springfield, Missouri, where his father-in-law had visited him and his wife two months prior to his death. While he was there, they had planned and envisioned working together in Gambella. When they heard the news of his death on December 14th 2003, their hearts were broken; their dreams disappeared. They lost their spiritual father and a visionary leader. He and his wife were hurt spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically.

When that widow he interviewed challenged him with the questions she asked him about forgiving the wrongdoers, including the question about his father-in-law, he was almost emotionally broken. Tears bubbled in his eyes, and he said, “Yes ma’am! I agree with you. It is so hard to forgive a criminal who murdered your loved ones and got away with a murderous crime without being brought to justice. But you can forgive those murderers for your favor and freedom.” And he quoted the word of God, which says, “The Lord lifts up those who bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and widows, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked” (Psalm 146:8-9 NIV).

He quoted this Scripture to the widow because he saw that her heart was full of outrage, anger, bitterness, resentment, revenge and non-forgiveness. He encouraged her that God wants to heal her heart, but she needed to forgive her adversaries who murdered her husband. He told her that God understands her pain and bitterness, but He doesn’t want her to hold on to her hurt and pain. The researcher included himself in the pain and

said to the widow, “We all need healing by forgiving our enemies and seeking reconciliation in our lives.” He continued, “It takes willingness and work to forgive, and the rewards are huge. On the other side of the process of forgiveness is freedom, for you and for others, as well as joy in walking the path that God has laid before you.”

Even though the researcher tried to encourage her with the word of God, she still felt that God had been unfair to her, and there was God’s spokesman, a pastor who was telling her to be grateful to God for what had happened to her husband, forgiving her husband’s murderers. In that moment, the researcher felt very inadequate, not knowing any words that he could use to ease her hurt and pain. Yet he told her that he was not telling her to deny reality or to repress her true feelings. In saying that, he guided her to the book of Psalms where the psalmist says, “I lift mine eyes to the hill from where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1-2 NIV). He encouraged her not to say my pain comes from the Lord, or my tragedy comes from the Lord. He told her to seek the Lord for his help, where her help should come from.

After the researcher talked with her, the emotional attachment he had for her was too much for him to bear, but he had to live with the reality that no Anyuwaa was exempt; and the Anyuwaas’ tragedies cause despair to many Anyuwaa in Gambella. The reality of this disease was very painful, especially if it includes a story of betrayal.

Even at that time, as a researcher, he desperately wanted to give hope to that widow and others who suffered from HIV and AIDS or had loved ones affected by the virus and the massacre. He knew how the community was in need of forgiveness, grace, love and hope. The researcher wanted to encourage the people of Gambella, especially

the Anyuwaa ethnic group, to be mindful that they could play the role of wounded healer among themselves. They were all familiar with the road each one walked on – a road of pain, confusion, fear and stigma.

The researcher learned that during the time he was doing research in Gambella, the Gambella region was the number one HIV and AIDS infected region in Ethiopia. The HIV and AIDS rate was 65% to 70% percent. If you meet ten people in the town, seven of them were HIV or AIDS infected. Horrible!

When the researcher learned how much the people of Gambella were affected by HIV/AIDS, he consulted some key leaders and asked for their permission to talk about HIV/AIDS at his workshops and seminars. They gave him a green light to not only talk about HIV/AIDS, but asked if he could also teach a lesson on this detrimental matter, and he was very excited to hear that answer from those key leaders.

Since the researcher had learned that the people of Gambella were living with the pain caused by HIV/AIDS and were not forgiving each other, he talked to the people who participated in the workshop about HIV/AIDS as an illustration of the impact of non-forgiveness on their hearts, lives, and relationships within their communities.

The researcher began his workshops and seminars on subjects like the grace of God, forgiveness, non-forgiveness, revenge, anger, holding grudges in one's heart, the love of God, choosing hope, embracing forgiveness for Jesus Christ's sake, and more. As he learned that many people of Gambella were infected by HIV/AIDS, he asked himself if they know that they have terminal disease. This disease is incurable. It is a disease like a parasite living in the body. It is living in the body, eating the white blood cells, and

weakening them. The purpose of the white blood cells in the body is to fight and prevent diseases that enter it.

When a person gets the HIV/AIDS disease in his or her body, it will support any other disease that enters. Even the weakest disease can kill the person because the virus weakens the power of the white blood cells that are supposed to attack and prevent the disease. But by now, doctors have discovered medicines that HIV/AIDS virus victims can take – pills to prevent the virus from eating the white blood cells. If they take these medicines every day, they will live as normal person. The medicines help to keep the white blood cells at their normal level.

As long as the infected person takes these medicines every day, he or she will live longer as a normal person. So it is up to those infected to acquire these medicines, which are free from a hospital or clinic. But if the person stops taking the medicines, the power of the virus can be stronger than before. It can weaken the power of white blood cells so badly that even the weakest disease can kill the person. The HIV/AIDS victim must not stop taking the medicine if he or she wants to live longer. As soon as he or she quits taking the medicines he or she will get weaker and thinner and eventually die.

Non-forgiveness is like the HIV/AIDS virus. It eats up the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This fruit that non-forgiveness attacks are love, peace, joy, goodness, meekness and self-control. Whenever somebody offends you or murders your loved ones, you feel hurt. Emotionally, your heart breaks. You get angry and feel pain in your heart. In this situation, you are ready to react. Revenge or forgive, you don't know what to do. You know you are hurt and in pain. You need relief and release from your heartache. In this situation, most victims think that the instant solution is revenge, or punishing the

offenders. Revenge may help the victims to feel good; thinking that hurt for hurt gets them even with the wrongdoer. No! Revenge can mislead the heart and mind of the person who chooses it. He is thinking that his reaction gives him release. No! Revenge buries love, goodness, freedom, human relationships, and joy into a grave called non-forgiveness. Those who have this grave in their hearts have a disease that terminates all the good fruit in their hearts, minds, souls and spirits. Non-forgiveness attracts every evil thing and draws them to its power.

What is the power of non-forgiveness? Pride! The heart that is full of unforgiving evil is like the heart that Jesus Christ talks about in Mathew 15:18, “But the things that come out of the mouth, come from the heart, and these make a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean” (NIV). So revenge can make the person who murdered the person who murdered his loved ones an unclean murderer too.

Therefore, the solution that brings freedom is not revenge but forgiveness. By forgiving a person who murdered your loved ones, you are freeing yourself from the evil spirit of non-forgiveness and you keep your heart pure from uncleanness, evil, and the sinful act of murder. Forgiveness is the real remedy and medicine that can cure the heart and let the Holy Spirit come live there. The forgiven heart is the heart where the Holy Spirit abides.

Like HIV/AIDS, non-forgiveness, hatred, murder, resentment, bitterness, and greed, just to mention a few, are diseases destroying the hearts, minds, souls, and spirits of many people around the world and in Gambella, Ethiopia. They need forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration, peace, and spiritual prosperity.

In conclusion, the workshops, seminars, biblical training, and preaching was amazing for the participants and scary for the researcher. It was amazing because he saw hundreds of people be delivered, changed, transformed, and even saved by the grace and power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This research work was not only wonderful for the researcher, but also scary because this topic is real, therapeutic, and practical in Gambella, where the government of Ethiopia does not see and treat the indigenous ethnic groups as equal citizens because of the color of their skins, inequality, prejudice, favoritism, racism, illiteracy, economics, politics, and more. It was very hard for the researcher to talk about this petition, which creates questions in the minds of the government leaders. Questions like, a petition for what? Forgiveness? Why forgiveness? And they know that the researcher is not only crying to God for forgiveness but also asking God for justice to be done in Gambella, where injustice is clearly rampant in every government office from where it should flow.

This was not easy research because the researcher was dealing with real, tangible and practical issues. One was that he is from one of the indigenous tribes of Gambella. The government and individuals from other ethnic groups see him as a threat. His own ethnic group sees him as a traitor, because individuals in his ethnic group who desire revenge would like to see him join them in that, but he was on the path of forgiveness, the only way to reconciliation, restoration and a peaceful life. So, this project helped the researcher to decide and choose to follow the way of Jesus Christ and others who forgive and are reconciled to their offenders.

The researcher learned that the Anyuwaa people were very angry. They were victims living with trauma. The researcher told them it is true that victims seldom get

respect or are taken seriously. The victim mentality sees no options and eliminates the chance to make positive decisions. By not taking responsibility for their own growth, victims don't even respect themselves. The atrocities against Anyuwaa lives cause anger in their hearts. There are lots of hidden traumas in the past that Anyuwaa people have never dealt with. No one would disagree that Anyuwaa people were killed in Gambella on December 13, 2003. The Ethiopian government and international community understand that it was a hideous, stupefying unfair. The Anyuwaa people should know that what happened to them was unfair but besides validating the pain, they need to accept it and go on with life or the anger, hatred and hostility will stay in their hearts forever and ruin their lives.

The researcher asked the Anyuwaa who participated in the survey, "What price can you pay for other people's crimes?" "Revenge," they answered. The researcher told them that revenge is not a good solution. If you take revenge, the relatives of the person you killed will also take revenge and kill you or your relatives again. Then the circle of killing each other will go on and on. That is what has been happening in Gambella for many centuries. It doesn't make sense to choose an option that hurts and only leads to more pain. The researcher told them that they need to go from bondage to freedom, from hate to love, from war to peace, from hopelessness to hope, from sin and death to gracious life, and from Satan to Jesus Christ. So the researcher believes that in the midst of overwhelming difficulties – depression and wondering whether life was worth living in Gambella, he told the people that they should still hold onto the thread of hope that God was faithful, even when they were not. Their hope should continue to be restored, even amidst the pain of mourning for their loved ones. Sometime people go through tragedies

and tough times and walk through complete hopelessness in order to experience true hope. The researcher was not there just to do this research, but also to encourage them to stay hopeful even though since December 13, 2003, the Anyuwaa people have lived through times of hopelessness, depression, and even despair.

The researcher encouraged the people in Gambella to hold onto the grace of God, forgiving their offenders, loving each other, and holding onto the anchor of hope, reconciliation and restoration. All these are why the researcher wanted to write a petition for forgiveness in Gambella. The reader will see the rest in the analysis and evaluation chapter, beginning on the next page.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Introduction

After the researcher had finished conducting seminars, workshops, and trainings, and preaching and teaching and more about God's forgiveness and reconciliation, he gave God the Father and Jesus Christ thanks, adoration, praise, and worship. He also reminded participants that they should thank God for His mercy, kindness, faithfulness, and love toward them. He admonished them to give thanks to Jesus Christ for what He has done on the cross. He died for their sins. If Jesus Christ had not come and died for their sins, there would be no escape from the wrath of God that the whole world deserves to face as the result of sin. There would be no mercy and forgiveness. But, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love for His people, forgives and makes those who believe in Jesus Christ alive together with Christ (see Ephesians 2:4-5).

God's mercy is rich, immeasurable, overflowing, abundant, and unlimited. The truth is, everyone deserves death in hell because of sin. God, because of His gracious and merciful personality, decides to save everyone who believes in His sovereign grace of salvation. A. W. Tozer says, "Salvation is the restoration of a right relation between man and his Creator, a bringing back to normal of the Creator-creature relation."¹ No one would be saved apart from God's sovereign grace. John MacArthur, the president of the Master's College and Seminary and author of many books writes, "The thing that keeps

¹ A.W. Tozer, *The Definitive Classic: The Pursuits of God*, Edited by James Snyder, (Ventura, California: Regal, 2013), 92.

sinner from being reconciled to God is not a deficiency of mercy or grace on God's side of the equation. It is sin, and sin is a problem. John MacArthur writes, "Rebellion, disobedience, murdering, rejections, jealousy and hatred are in the nature of sinners".² God is merciful to His creatures, especially human beings. It is the unmerited favor of God, who in His mercy and loving kindness grants His grace to the people who believe in His salvation gifts.

The researcher admonished the participants to remember the grace of God that Jesus Christ bought by His blood for them, to thank God for granting them such gracious gifts of forgiveness, grace, love, and hope as the benefits of their salvation. Salvation comes only when people receive by faith the gift of God's grace which is one of the benefits of God's forgiveness and reconciliation, and which the author of this thesis project aims to see as the outcome among the ethnic groups in Gambella, Ethiopia.

The Benefits of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Among the reasons why the researcher decided to write a thesis project as a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia were salvation and healing. Spiritual salvation and physical healing are objectives that the researcher would like to see as results of his research project. He wanted to let the people of Gambella know that they could be saved by believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; they could be healed if they forgive themselves and ask God to heal their land. He wanted the people of Gambella to know that they could reap the benefits of forgiveness and reconciliation if they believe the gospel's truth (Galatians 6:7). As the Apostle Paul writes, "I am not ashamed of the

² John MacArthur, *The Truth About Grace*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 17.

gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles” (Romans 1:16 NIV).

The researcher wanted to give the people of Gambella the awareness that God freely offers them eternal life in Christ Jesus. But they need to understand that the exact process by which that life becomes available to them is sometimes difficult. Therefore, God paints various pictures in the Bible to help readers grasp the concept, each one with its own unique emphasis. Suffering, persecutions, various trials, perils, and more are a few ways through which God can display the grace of His glorious divine nature in and among His people. So the researcher wanted to surely encourage the people of Gambella to recognize the possibility of receiving God’s grace for the benefit of salvation. And they need to believe that the gracious God will not leave nor forsake them because His grace is sufficient for those who always trust Him. So the focus of the researcher was to encourage, support, and help those people in Gambella who have experienced tragedies; he wanted to remind them to make a petition to God in prayer, hoping that the God of grace and mercy might hear them and heal their land by His grace.

Grace

According to the researcher, grace is the whole bundle of salvation that includes forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, restoration, and regeneration. Jesus Christ is the one and only way to God the Father (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Salvation is provided by God’s grace for believers, which He gives in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24) based on His death (Romans 3:25; 5:8), resurrection (Romans 5:10), and continued intercession for believers (Hebrews 7:25).

God forgives people because Jesus Christ reconciled them back to Him by grace through His death on the cross. This is why the researcher sees grace as one of the core benefits of forgiveness, redemption, restoration, and reconciliation.

What is grace? Most evangelical Christians might know grace as God's unmerited favor. The heart of the term grace is the idea of the divine favor granted to believers by the triune God. A.W. Tozer expands, "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the undeserved."³ Grace is the unmerited operation of God in the hearts of men and women, affected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Grace is not only unmerited favor; it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserved the wrath of God. Showing kindness to a stranger is unmerited favor; forgiving wrongdoers and doing good to ones' enemies is more the spirit of grace. Grace of God has appeared to the world, through Jesus Christ bringing salvation and instructing believers to live for God (Titus 2:11-12 NIV).

God's grace is enough for everyone's sin, even murders. Max Lucado, a Christian author writes, "There are times when God, having given us His grace hears our appeals and says, 'my grace is sufficient for you!' Is He being unfair?"⁴ When the researcher read this, he thought about the Anyuwaa people who might be wondering and asking God why He brought Nuer people and Ethiopian highlanders to Gambella in the first place? He wanted to encourage the Anyuwaa people that perhaps it was because God wants them to learn how to live with others. The Anyuwaa people need to learn what Miroslav Volf

³ MacArthur, 93.

⁴ Max Lucado, *In The Grip of Grace* (Dallas: World Publishing, 1996), 136-137.

writes in *Exclusion and Embrace*.⁵ Even though the Anyuwaa people are different in many ways from other ethnic groups in Gambella, such as culture, language, mindset, and more, they need to embrace other people according to the love of God. God wants the Anyuwaa people to love other people as Jesus loves them. Anyone can love a friend, but only a few can love an enemy. So the researcher sees the love of God as one benefit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Love

As difficult as it may be to understand the terrible life in Gambella, historically, God has used sinful and broken men and women who live with each other in community to show the world more about Him, His grace and His love. Through the Bible, the history of the people of God, and the testimonies of faithful believers, it is very evidently true that God has poured grace, faith, hope and love into the hearts of people.

The researcher's passionate and enthusiastic desire was and is to see the people of Gambella defined by and understanding what love is. He was eager to let the people of Gambella grasp in their consciousness and souls the unconditional love of God so that they would understand the advantages of forgiveness, and that love is the master key to unlock all doors to the blessed hope because, "love keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:5-6 NIV). Love is such a powerful fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is so beneficial for anyone who is forgiven by the grace and love of God to forgive others, so that they too would receive abundant blessings because of the gracious love of God.

⁵ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

Even though the Anyuwaa widows in Gambella wondered about the love of God because of the death of their husbands, murdered by Ethiopian highlanders on December 13-15, 2003, the researcher was still optimistic to encourage those Anyuwaa widows and other ethnic groups in Gambella who have experienced tragedies and atrocious lives that they should pursue forgiveness, grace, love, and hope so that they would have a peaceful, loving and stable region. Why? Because love never fails, and never ends (1 Corinthians 13:8 NIV), they should embrace love instead of hate, and forgiveness instead of revenge, bitterness, resentment, and holding grudges against their offenders.

Scarlett Lewis, whose son Jesse was murdered with other kids and teachers on December 14, 2012 at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, writes, “It is about choosing love instead of anger, fear, or hatred, and standing our ground, like Jesse did. And it is about how all these choices can change your life and even the world we live in.”⁶ That is what the researcher wanted to do for the people of Gambella. He wanted to help them see grace, love, and hope as benefits of forgiveness in their lives, which would guide them to healing, salvation, freedom, and peaceful relationships in the region of Gambella, Ethiopia.

Before the researcher went to Gambella to work on this project, he did not know the depth of the effect of the killing, tragedy and trauma in the lives of the Anyuwaa people, but he was able to see the despair and pain, the lack of joy, love, forgiveness, and any spark of true unity among the ethnic groups. When he saw the condition of the ethnics groups of Gambella, his stomach tightened as he wondered if that was how those

⁶ Scarlett Lewis with Natasha Stoynoff, *Nurturing Healing Love: A Mother's Journey of Hope and Forgiveness* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 2013), 82.

people saw him when they looked at him. He quoted what Lewis said, “Oh Lord! Am I like them? No! I do not want to be like these people. I am not dead yet! I refuse to exist just to carry my pain from one day to the next. I have a life to live, and I am going to choose love. I won’t be a prisoner of my pain, I will find a way to deal with it, and I will make my life count for something.”⁷ Since then the researcher has wanted to hold on to forgiveness, grace, love and hope not only for him, but also for others.

The researcher wanted the people of Gambella to choose love because “love wins,” as pastor Rob Bell puts it in the title of one of his many books.⁸ Since love never fails and always wins, the researcher encourages the people of Gambella to make love a way of life in spite of tragedies, their pain and wounds, conflict, violence and hatred, because love can help them to go forward toward a peaceful future. He wants them to choose the true love of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they put that love in their hearts, there will be no room for hatred and revenge because it is a reality. If their hearts are full of His love, they will see their future more clearly and brightly.

When the researcher talked about love with the participants of the workshops and seminars he conducted in Gambella, people asked him this question: “How can I love people, even those who don’t like me, who murdered my loved ones?” It was very hard for the researcher to answer this kind of question. But he answered them according to the Scripture, such as John 13:34-35, “I am giving you a new commandment: love each other just as I have loved you, you should love each other,” 1 Peter 4:8, “Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitudes of sins,” 1 John

⁷ Lewis, *Nurturing Healing Love*, 64.

⁸ Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person who Ever Lived* (New York: Harper One, 2010).

4:12, “If anyone claims, ‘I am living in the light,’ but hates a Christian brother and sister, that person is still living in darkness,” and 1 John 4:2, “If we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us” (all NIV).

The researcher answered the question above according to these Scriptures in order to tell the participants that being a Christian comes with certain expectations, and one is that you will love others, even your enemies. Loving others is one of the proofs that you belong to Christ, who loves sinners even though He was and is not a sinner like them. In Christians, the Holy Spirit awakens love for others and you can ask God to make you willing, and choose to love others, even those who are difficult to love, and God will hear your prayers. God loves you so much that he sent His Son Jesus Christ to earth to die for you. Jesus Christ took the punishment you deserve for your sins. His forgiveness is so complete that it is as though you never sinned at all. His love for you can never be changed or broken. This is the message that the researcher encouraged the participants to receive and put into practice. He admonished the participants to make grace, love and hope their way of life, and he told them that God’s love is the key to peaceful unity in their region. If you have to know God’s love before you in turn can love your neighbor or yourself, then your patterns of life need some rethinking. People go about frantically trying to earn each other’s love. Nations give economic aid and technical assistance trying to win each other’s favor. If they have not yet recognized God’s love, no wonder why people do not succeed in life. No wonder people hate, steal, murder, and do all kinds of cruel things. It is no wonder that worldwide brotherhood doesn’t come about by means of communism, democracy, socialism, or any other type of government system; no

wonder society continues injustices. People can live without experiencing true love until they accept God's love. It has to start with God.

People in the Old Testament believed that God was faithful because He had agreed to be. Now Christians know that God is faithful because He loves them. When Christians consider what they are and what they ought to be, they see that this love of God is a miracle that creates a sense of blessed hope. So there is hope for the painful and broken hearts of individuals, communities, ethnic groups, and societies who trust in God's grace, forgiveness, love and hope.

Hope

The researcher wants to begin this section about hope with Romans 8:18-25

(NIV) which says,

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. The creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Hope is a powerful word. It dwells in the life of every living human being. Danny Gokey wrote in his book *Hope in Front of Me*, "Hope is where we find reason to live and make our way in the world."⁹ Like faith, hope is also active in every turn of one's life. It is the lens through which one sees the future. Hope is expecting something and then trusting in something larger than oneself. That was how the author of Hebrews saw hope

⁹ Danny Gokey with Ben Stroup, *Hope in Front of Me* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2013),

by faith, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1 NIV). Faith and hope are intertwined. They are like twins. They are separate but they were one. Gokey writes, “Faith does not preclude us from being broken. Instead, faith gives us the strength to hold on to hope when everything comes crashing down.”¹⁰ Faith is functioning in the present moment through hope in the future. Faith does not see the future without hope. A faithful person sees the future through hope. Human beings rely on faith and hope. Without them, human beings are dead. That is why it is so detrimental to lose hope. A hopeless person is like living dead, physically walking and living but living as a dead person. The Apostle Paul understood this when he wrote, “Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord; We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:6-7 NIV). Whether people confess and declare it or deny it, they know deep down in their guts that they live by faith and hope because without hope, the future of any human being is full of darkness and death. Without hope, life is uncertain.

Those who are dying in their sick beds hope that they will get well. Angry people hope that they will be happy and joyful again. Those who experience physical and psychological pain or mental depression hope that they will heal and be healthy again. The poor hope that one day they will become rich and prosper. Hope is not like a wish or fairytale. It is a real contractual connection between now and then, today and tomorrow, present and future, and physical life to spiritual life. It is a fact. It is not like wishes that can be banished and disappear but hope stays within living human beings. Wishes are like nightmares and unrealistic daydreams and visions. Hope abides in the real and

¹⁰ Gokey, 4.

prophetic dreams and visions in the hearts of godly dreamers and visionaries. No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote to his Corinthian audience that all gifts will cease except three that will remain. These three are faith, hope, and love, and love is the greatest of them all (1 Corinthians 13:13). When the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ see Him when He comes back to be with His followers in His kingdom of light, they will not look for Him by faith anymore, and they will not hope to see Him any longer, because He will be living with them always and they will love Him forever.

Hope is being sure and certain of something that one sees by faith. If that something has not happened yet from one's point of view, they hope it will happen, and since from God's point of view it is certain, they can end up with a certain hope. Christians' lives are built on this kind of sure hope. They believe that they are saved by believing in Jesus Christ their Lord – yet of course, only God knows. They hope for the resurrection of their bodies; only God knows it will happen. Christians live their lives wherever they happen to be without fear, without too much concern and worry about details of their lives, because they fix their eyes on Jesus Christ, the beginner and finisher of their faith. Jesus Christ is the hope of Christians' glory. They are comfortable in God's love, secure in God's certain hope, and they see the kingdom of their King Jesus Christ coming. Hope is an anchor of one's faith and life. This was the kind of hope that the researcher wanted to convey to the people of Gambella. He told them to put their hope in God.

The people of Gambella need to know that love and hope are still alive in their hearts, and the researcher reminded them not to give up hope for a blessed future. One participant asked the researcher during the workshop what he would do when his life condition seemed hopeless. The researcher answered from the Scripture's perspective. He

chose Hannah as a biblical example from 1 Samuel 1:10. Hannah was in anguish. She cried bitterly as she prayed to the Lord. The Lord God answered her prayers. In the midst of Hannah's hopelessness, she prayed to God, believing that if any hope could be found, it would be found in God alone. In Proverbs 10:28, the author says, "The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing" (NIV). Godly men and women see the outcome of their hope because they focus on God, who holds their futures. Hannah asked God to give her a son and He granted her request.

Based on the Christian perspective regarding hope, the researcher told the participants that they could focus on God's hope and eternity. No matter how hopeless things seemed there in Gambella, they should believe in Jesus Christ, who could give them ultimate hope and eternal life. Jesus Christ has promised a joyful eternal future for those who believe in Him. He said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the place where I am going" (John 14:1-4 NIV). Based on Jesus' promises, there is much more living and working to do beyond death and the grave. Because He is alive, people believe in His eternal hope and life. Hope is an anchor of faith and life for those who believe in God and trust in the promises of Jesus. They know that their lives will never shatter because they put their hope in the God of hope and love.

Since the researcher knew that there were ethnic groups who were angry, vengeful, and unwilling to forgive their offenders, he wanted to tell them about the beauty of grace-filled community. He said,

Jesus showed up in the midst of wounded people, healing them and sending them out to minister to others. They became, then, a fellowship of wounded healers. This describes what Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German theologian and martyr, meant when he penned the phrase, “Sacramental Community.” There is no difference in our hearts, needs or humanity. We are the same. As Jesus touches each of His people with love, grace, forgiveness, and hope, they in turn need to touch each other.

Summary of what the researcher learned

Whether in Gambella, Ethiopia or elsewhere, people need to understand and embrace the constructive and positive impact of grace, forgiveness, love and hope in their lives and the communities where they associate. Intentionally choosing forgiveness, love, and hope as ways of dealing with pain, hurt, stress, depression and trauma is a very productive and healthy process to wholeness and healing. That was why the researcher of this project encouraged the ethnic communities of Gambella to choose grace, forgiveness, love and hope as ways to cope with the atrocities and tragedies in their past instead of hatred, bitterness, resentment, anger, revenge, non-forgiveness, and holding grudges. Choosing harmful words and allowing non-forgiveness to work in one’s life could have a destructive impact on the lives of people and their communities.

Even though the researcher found that there were some ethnic groups in Gambella that did not want to get along with other groups, he wanted to focus on constructive and positive ideas like forgiving each other, living gracious lives to help each other, loving one another, and hoping together for harmonizing and peacefully developing the Gambella region, which was the main goal of writing a *Petition For God’s Forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia*. For this purpose, the researcher presented some case studies of different individuals from different societies and ethnic groups around the world – Jewish holocaust survivors, Cambodia, Rwanda, the United States, and South Africa – who

experienced the atrocities and tragedies of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and murder of family members. The case studies were presented to the Anyuwaa widows, the Nuer leaders, the Oromo elders and community leaders, Anyuwaa leaders, Amhara leaders, Tigre leaders, and Majanger leaders. It was presented to them in the classroom settings.

The first case study that the researcher presented to the participants was of a Holocaust survivor. He discussed the event of the Holocaust with the participants and chose Corrie Ten Boom as one example. Corrie Ten Boom was one of the millions of people who were taken to concentration camps in Germany and other countries to be killed. Having found for herself the victory that overcomes the world in the horror of a concentration camp, she could not keep it to herself. She has become a worldwide witness, a troubadour of Christ. Instead of hating the German people for what their government had done to her and the Jewish people her family tried to help, she chose forgiveness and the love of God. She wrote,

The most important part of our task will be to tell everyone who listen that Jesus is the only answer to the problems that are disturbing the hearts of men, women and of nations. We shall have the right to speak because we can tell from our experiences that His light is more powerful than the deepest darkness. Surely, nothing could be darker than our experiences here. I keep telling myself, “Things cannot possibly grow worse;” but every day we see that misery only deepens. How wonderful that the reality of His presence is greater than the reality of the hell about us.¹¹

Corrie Ten Boom quotes Karl Heinz who wrote that forgiveness requires more strength than hatred. “Oh, no; hatred is stronger and forgiveness is weak. But the day will come when the righteousness of God shall cover earth as the waters cover the sea.”¹² She

¹¹ Corrie Ten Boom, *Amazing Love: True Stories of The Power of Forgiveness* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2011), 9.

¹² Ten Boom, 13.

means that the act of forgiveness is acting in God's grace and forgiveness. The impact on the participants was awareness. The researcher wanted them to know that they were not alone; there are people who have experienced ethnic cleansing, genocide, and mass murder like them.

The second case study that the researcher presented was of two people from Cambodia: Sokreaksa S. Himm and Oni Vitandham. Pastor Himm survived Cambodia's killing fields when the Khmer Rouge regime killed his whole family except for him and his sister. The Khmer Rouge regime claimed the lives of 3.5 million people in Cambodia. Himm wrote, "In 1977, my family was executed by the Khmer Rouge. I, along with my sister, survived the killing."¹³ In 1989, Himm was accepted for resettlement in Canada. He found Christ Jesus. He went to Bible College and seminary and then he realized the productive power of forgiveness in his life. He was looking for justice and revenge but he remembered what his father told him, "If there is no love, justice cannot exist."¹⁴ Himm found a new reality, that Jesus Christ wants His followers to forgive their enemies. Based on this new awareness, Himm decided to go back to Cambodia to look for his family's killers; if he found them he would forgive them. He did find his family's killers and forgave them and prayed for them. He wrote, "Don't try to fight for justice when people don't understand the principle of love. They will never listen to you."¹⁵ Using Himm's example, the researcher assured the participants that forgiveness brings grace, love and

¹³ Sokreaksa S. Himm, *The Tears of my Soul: He Survived Cambodia's Killing Fields. His Family Didn't. Could he Forgive?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2006), 10.

¹⁴ Himm, 52.

¹⁵ Himm, 51.

hope to the hearts of the individuals and communities who choose to embrace forgiveness and genuinely pass it on to others as they need it.

Oni Vitandham is also a survivor of the killing fields in Cambodia. She was four years old when the Khmer Rouge killed people there. Her family was killed too. She fled to Thailand. She lived there as a refugee, and then she came to the United States. Now she is grown up, married, and has her own children. She wrote a book called, *On the Wings of a White Horse: a Cambodian Princess's Story of Surviving the Khmer Rouge Genocide*. In that book she wrote, "I hope my story will empower other survivors of genocide and that it will inform those who might not otherwise know about the moment in history that is often forgotten."¹⁶ Vitandham did not forget the past tragedies in Cambodia when her family perished, but she let the past go. She knew that "hope for a better tomorrow was always in her heart."¹⁷ She has founded a nonprofit organization to help children in Cambodia and the United States. She wants to tell the children about her childhood experience. She wrote,

Telling the story of those awful events in Cambodia is part of a necessary therapeutic process of recovery: first, recognition of what happened must come, followed by acceptance and understanding. This allowed forgiveness and a letting go of the past; which is essential to healing the wounds of the hearts. Once the wounds are healed, effective action can be taken to restore lives in the communities and in a particular society.¹⁸

There is nothing more important in life than finding and following one's spiritual path and destiny, for in the heart of every person dwells the spirit, and from the spirit

¹⁶ Onie Vitandham, *On the Wings of a White Horse: A Cambodian Princess's Story of Surviving the Khmer Rouge Genocide* (Mustang, OK: Tale Publishing, 2005), 12.

¹⁷ Vitandham, 12.

¹⁸ Vitandham, 15.

comes action. For peaceful results one needs to act on forgiving wrongdoers, giving them grace and love so that there is hope for all.

The fourth, fifth and sixth case studies are from the United States. The researcher began these with the Amish Community in Pennsylvania that experienced the tragedy of the death of their young girls. He learned that the Amish are gracious people. From the book *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*, the researcher learned what happened on October 2, 2006, when Charles Carl Roberts IV carried his guns and his rage into an Amish schoolhouse near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. Five girls died that day, and five others were seriously wounded. “The Nickel Mines Amish certainly did not anticipate the horror of October 2. They were, however, uncommonly prepared to respond to it with gracious, forbearance, and love. Indeed, the biggest surprise at Nickel Mines was not the intrusion of evil but the Amish response. The biggest amazement at the Nickel Mines tragedy was Amish’s Grace.”¹⁹

According to the Amish community of Nickel Mines, grace is a broad concept that characterizes loving and compassionate responses to others. A gracious response may take many forms: comforting a person who is grieving, providing assistance to someone in need, sacrificing for another’s benefits, and so on. For the Amish communities, forgiveness is a particular form of grace that always involves an offense, offenders, and a victim (in this case, a victimized community). When forgiveness happens, a victim forgoes the right to revenge and commits to overcoming bitter feeling toward the wrongdoers. Some people who have studied forgiveness extend this definition a step further, contending that positive feelings toward the offenders, feelings such as

¹⁹Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 17.

love and compassion, are also essential to forgiveness; that gracious actions extended to the offenders are an important aspect of authentic forgiveness.

Another case study from the United States is of five missionaries who went to Ecuador, South America to reach the Waodani warrior tribe with the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before they had even learned the language of the Waodani people, Waodani warriors killed all five missionary men, leaving their wives as widows. After all the men were killed, the wives and their children continued the mission work. God used those widows and saved some of the Waodani people. After a while, these godly women came back to the United States and trained their children accordingly. Today, they are grown up, married, and have their own children. One of the martyred missionaries' sons is Steve Saint. Steve was five years old when his father Nate Saint was brutally speared and killed by the Waodani warriors. But they had already planted the seed of the word of God in the land, the air, and the hearts of Waodani people; they knew the result would be seen. Since the word of God is powerful and truthful, it grew, transformed their minds, and became a reality in their culture and lives. The word of God changed their worldview about foreigners and transformed their culture of war and killing to a loving one. Steve Saint also went back to visit these people as an adult.

Decades after their lives were changed by learning to walk God's path, the Waodani asked Steve to return to the jungle with his family to live among them and teach them how to interact with the encroaching outside world. Striving to mesh his two very different worlds, Steve had to face the tragic events of his past and learn to fully trust God through terrible danger, great loss, and remarkable joy. At the request of the Waodani elders, Steve returned to the Amazon in 1995 with his family. His experiences

in the jungle led him to establish I-TEC, a nonprofit organization that assists the “hidden Church” in its journey toward independence, self-sustenance and maturity.²⁰

Steve has written a book called *End of the Spear* and produced a movie by the same name based on this true story. Steve Saint’s story can be healing to the Anyuwaaw widows, community, and individuals who have experienced pain in their lives and have wrestled with seeds of bitterness as a result. It offers a compelling portrait of authentic human grace, forgiveness, love, and compassion. Steve Saint’s incredible story of forgiveness and grace makes it clear that he was able to see the sovereign hand of a divine providence, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Following the example of his father, mother, and aunt, it never even occurred to him to hate the Waodani people. He forgave them, loved them, and lived with them. He and his sister were baptized at the same place and by the same men who had speared their dad and hacked his body with a machete. The amazing grace and unconditional love of God give absolute hope.

The final case study from the United States is of Douglass Brooks. He and his sister Leslie grew up in a home filled with love, compassion, faith and hope. Their father Richard was a leader in the Baptist Church. Their mother Marilyn was a woman of faith and talent, turning down a scholarship to the renowned Juilliard School to join Richard on the Brazilian mission field. On their return, Brooks was 16 and Leslie 12. Richard became pastor of a large church in Oklahoma City. On October 15, 1979, Brooks opened the door of their modest family home to what he believed was a man in need. The man, a drugged-up drifter named Glen Ake, was joined by his partner, Steven Hatch. They pulled out guns, tied up the Douglasses, repeatedly assaulted Leslie, shot all four family

²⁰ Steve Saint, *End of the Spear: A True Story*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2005), 1.

members, and left them for dead. Richard and Marilyn died at the scene. Brooks and Leslie recovered from their wounds, but their ordeal had just begun. Ake and Hatch were caught, tried, and, in 1980, sentenced to death. For the next 16 years, however, the suffering rolled on as a legal system created to protect the rights of the accused dragged the Douglass children time after time to testify in court and relive that night. The story became national news, and it was continuing bad news for Brooks and Leslie, forced to sell their family home and possessions to pay medical bills. Brooks struggled through high school and college, repeatedly flunking out, drinking heavily, and given to bouts of rage. Leslie, once a beauty queen with a beautiful voice, fought to put her life together as she dealt with recurring nightmares and struggled in relationships. In a 1986 retrial, Ake was convicted again but received life in prison instead of death. Brooks Douglass became convicted as well, convicted that the system must no longer "step over the body of a victim to read the criminal his rights." Brooks earned his law degree, and, at age 27, became the youngest state senator in Oklahoma history where he passed a series of victims' rights bill. In 1995, a second turning point came. On a legislative tour of a state prison, Brooks saw Ake and requested a chance to talk to the man who had destroyed his family. The film *Heaven's Rain* shares the dramatic result of that meeting. After three senate terms, Brooks changed directions, pursuing long-held creative desires. With Hollywood writer and director Paul Brown, Brooks co-wrote the *Heaven's Rain* script and produced and starred in the film. While never shying from the hard facts, *Heaven's Rain* is ultimately a tribute to the love and faith of Brooks' parents. The Sunday before the tragedy, in fact, Richard Douglass preached on forgiveness. In a dramatization of that moment in the film, Brooks himself, playing his father, quotes Matthew 5:45, "He sends

the rain on the just and the unjust," and Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, "The quality of mercy is not strained. It dropped as the gentle rain from heaven."²¹

In February 1995, while on tour of the Oklahoma state penitentiary, Douglass came face to face with Glen Ake, one of the men who had killed his parents. He asked the warden if he could speak with the prisoner, who was on death row. Douglass had one question: why did you do it? The two men spoke for more than an hour. Ake was extremely remorseful and cried throughout the conversation. As he got up to leave, Douglass told Ake, "I forgive you." When he said those words, "All of a sudden, it felt like it was poison pouring out of the bottom of my feet. It was one of the most physical sensations I have ever had, like someone took a lamp off my chest. I felt like I could breathe again for the first time in fifteen years. As mentioned, Douglass went on to write and produce the film *Heaven's Rain*, which tells the story of the tragedy and examines his journey from anger and devastation to forgiveness. He has said that the faith so carefully nurtured by his parents helped guide him to a sense of peace."²²

Brooks Douglass could well have continued to watch his life drain away in anger, pain, and resentment had it not been for his act of forgiveness. Hopefully, if the Anyuwaa community understands the danger of bitterness, resentment and non-forgiveness, they would be motivated to do all they can to avoid hatred, and be quick to forgive so that they will see grace, love, and hope working in their lives and the lives of other communities who live in Gambella.

²² Joyce Meyer, *Do Yourself a Favor... FORGIVE: Learn How to Take Control of Your Life Through Forgiveness* (Nashville: Faith Words), 97-98.

The story of Brooks Douglass was very helpful to the sons and daughters of the Anyuwaa martyrs since they were very angry about their fathers. They understood that these kinds of tragedies have happened to other individuals, families and groups all over the world. The researcher wanted them to know that evil and wickedness are real everywhere, all over the globe. As Jesus says,

Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin; such thing must come, but woe to the man through whom they come. If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell” (Matthew 18:7-9 NIV).

The message of the Brooks Douglass story is forgiving offenders!

Conclusion

December 13, 2014, marked the eleventh anniversary of the Anyuwaas’ Genocide. The researcher asked many Anyuwaa survivors whom he met in Ethiopia, Kenya, and the United States if they would forgive the killers of their loved ones. By their answers, he was gripped by amazement at the people’s capacity and desire to forgive. During his time in Ethiopia and Kenya, he met people whose lives were dismantled by the genocide. They survived enormous evil, yet found reason to hope.

To conclude this section, the researcher prays to God for the people of Gambella using Psalm 130 (NIV),

Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord; O Lord hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. O [Gambella, Ethiopia] put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord unfailing love and with Him is full redemption. He Himself will redeem [the people Gambella] from their sins.

The researcher prays this prayer because his Anyuwaa people of Gambella are living in the agony and pain of the death of their loved ones. They need grace, forgiveness, love, and hope in their lives, communities, and region.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL GROWTH, INSIGHTS AND REFLECTION

Weaknesses of the Project

As it is required for the researcher to write his reflections and insights, and the strengths and weakness that he has faced during his research work, he wants to begin this section with weaknesses. He wants readers to imagine how difficult it would be to write this thesis if English was their fourth language. The American professors at Bethel Seminary might not understand how challenging this is for an African who learned to speak and write many different dialects before English. It is very difficult!

The difficulty of writing in English has been the main weakness. Writing this thesis project has been a very difficult task. The researcher has been struggling to finish for about eight years. Some readers might think, “There are Africans who can write English excellently.” The researcher agrees, but English might be a second language in their country. And English might be easier for Africans who moved to America when they were young, if they attended elementary, high school, college and seminary in America. But this researcher did his elementary study in Ethiopia where he did not study English well until high school. He was taught by Ethiopian teachers who could not speak English. For him, writing in English is often a source of great pain and anxiety. It is remarkable how hard it is for African students like him to sit down quietly and trust their own creativity if they think in one language and write in another. There seems to be a deep-seated resistance to writing. The researcher has experienced this over and over

again. Even after over twenty years of study and writing, he experiences real fear when he faces an empty mind and lack of vocabulary. Most of the time, he has imaginary readers (professors) in his mind who are looking over his shoulder and rejecting all the words, sentences, phrases, and chapters he has written. Most of the time it seems that every sentence fails to express what he really wants to say and that written words simply cannot hold what goes on in his mind and heart. It is very painful, and it is not easy for an African who did not learn proper in English in his country to write a perfect paper in English. Please, professors at Bethel Seminary be gracious and have mercy!

The second weakness that the researcher faced was a financial problem. Since the researcher returned from Ethiopia where he did mission work and his research project for over two years, he has not gotten a job that could go well with writing a thesis project. His wife has a part-time job working afternoon shifts, but they only have one car. It has been very hard for him to balance family life, writing time, helping children with their school work, and taking his wife to and from work five afternoons every week. It has been very busy, yet the researcher has not lost hope of finishing his Doctor of Ministry. Now he is almost finished. He cannot wait to see himself in the line to receive his Doctor of Ministry degree. Achieving this will be a joyful accomplishment that he has pursued for over twenty years.

The researcher thanks God for bringing him to America when he was a young adult. Even though he came after finishing high school in Ethiopia, he did not know how to speak and write English. After he came to America, he had to study English as a second language in order to learn how to write, and then he could go to college in Minnesota.

Today, when he thinks about his twelve grades completed in Ethiopia before coming to America, he was like a sixth grader in America. His first two years of college were terribly difficult. By the grace of God, his willingness to learn and teachable personality, and with helpful teachers, he finished his bachelor's and master's degrees.

His master's and now doctoral studies at Bethel Seminary have included a lot of frustration, discouragement, and hard times. But even though it has been very difficult for him to write in English, the teachers at Bethel Seminary have been very gracious to him, even if they cannot understand how challenging it is for him to write in English. He has to thank all of them for giving him knowledge, praying for him, equipping him, supporting him financially, and encouraging him to keep on studying and learning.

Strengths of the Project

Bethel Seminary has become the core place where the researcher learned to write better papers, dreamed of ministry, trained to preach, learned how to do research, and decided to write a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia. If not for Bethel Seminary, the researcher would not have envisioned pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree. Bethel Seminary first hired his wife to work as a full-time custodian, and her supervisor advised her that she, her children or her spouse could take classes at Bethel with her tuition benefit. She shared this with her husband, and it became a great opportunity for him to study for a Doctor of Ministry

Since the researcher knew that one day he would write a petition for God's forgiveness in Gambella, Ethiopia, he decided to take this opportunity to do so. As he finished all his classes and received permission to write on this topic, he was very excited because by then he was also going to Ethiopia as a missionary as well as to work on his

research project. This project helped the researcher decide to follow the way of Jesus Christ and others who chose to forgive and to be reconciled to their offenders.

As he began his research in Gambella, he gathered different ethnic groups. He led workshops and seminars on forgiveness, unforgiving hearts, anger, revenge, hatred, resentment, bitterness, reconciliation, peacemaking, restoration, unity, spiritual harmony and prosperity. He wanted the individuals and ethnic groups who participated in the workshops and seminars to be delivered, changed and transformed from the pain and hurt of past tragedies. He has seen freedom and change among those ethnic groups. As he taught them to learn from Rwanda and other ethnic groups who have gone through tragedies like them, he also grew, not only from what he taught, but also from hundreds of books, magazines, articles, and other material he has read about forgiveness, non-forgiveness, revenge, anger, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and more. He changed, transformed, and grew from non-forgiveness to forgiveness. He taught the people in Gambella to do the same and wants the reader to know what he taught.

Personal Growth and Insights

Learning from Rwanda and Other Ethnic Groups

In this chapter the researcher wants to relate stories he has learned about other people who have experienced tragedies. He has shared these with the Anyuwaa people in Gambella, in case they did not know, for example, what was done to Jewish people by Nazi Germany in the 1940s. The researcher wanted the people of Gambella to know that they were not alone. Evil and wickedness in the hearts of human beings are not new to the world, even though they seem new to the Anyuwaa people of Gambella. As they are still grieving and living in the shock of what was done to their loved ones on December

13-15, 2003, many Jewish people are also still asking themselves why millions of dear Jewish people were massacred in the Holocaust in Europe because the Nazi German government did not see them as human beings. Author Simon Wiesenthal quotes the comments of one German concentration camp guard to others.

You and your sensitive feelings! Men, you cannot go on like this. One must be hard on Jews! They are not our people. The Jew is not a human being! The Jews are the cause of all our misfortunes! And when you shoot one of them it is not the same thing as shooting one of us – it doesn't matter whether it is a man, a woman, or a child, they are different from us. Without question one must get rid of them.¹

They are different from us. They don't belong to us. We've got to kill them. If we keep them, we gain nothing, if we destroy them, we lose nothing.² Imagine this kind of attitude toward your fellow human beings. Many have experienced this attitude and hatred in Germany, Cambodia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Gambella, Ethiopia. This is not a new evil that began in Gambella. People have been killing each other throughout past generations for different kinds of reasons. In the case of Jewish people in Nazi Germany, the government did not see them as human beings, so they sent many of them to concentration camps, where millions were massacred.

Adolf Hitler, the German leader then, wanted to get rid of all Jews from Germany. Elie Wiesel writes, "It is obvious that the war which Hitler and his accomplices waged was a war not only against Jewish men, women and children, but also against Jewish religion, Jewish culture and Jewish tradition, therefore Jewish memory."³ The Nazi

¹ Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (Opera Mundi, Paris: Schocken Books, 1998), 49.

² Sokreaksa S. Himm, *The Tears of my Soul: He Survived Cambodia's Killing Fields. His Family Didn't. Could He Forgive?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2006), 57.

³ Elie Wiesel, "Preface to the New Translation," in *Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), viii.

government wanted to get rid of Jewish people and Jewish documentary records from Germany. Wiesel tells of a recently discovered document, evidence that in the early days of Hitler's rule, the Nazis in Germany set out to build a society in which there simply would be no more room for Jews.⁴ They did not like the Jewish people and wanted to kill all of them. No surprise! Evil and wickedness is real in the world and in the hearts of human beings. God alone is the righteous, omniscient attorney and judge. God has been the defender of the Jewish people, His chosen people, for thousands of years.

Today, the whole world knows that millions of Jewish people were killed by Nazi Germany in the 1940s. It was an actual, historical atrocity, no question about it! The only question is that of the possibilities and limits of forgiveness.

Simon Wiesenthal was one of the Jewish people imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp. He was taken one day from his work in the camp to the bedside of a dying member of the SS. Haunted by the crimes in which he had participated, the dying soldier wanted to confess to and obtain absolution from the Jew. Faced with the choice between compassion and justice, silence and truth, Wiesenthal said nothing. But even years after the war ended, he wondered if he had done the right thing. What would you have done in his place? In his book *The Sunflower*, fifty-three distinguished men and women respond to Wiesenthal's questions. They are theologians, political leaders, writers, jurists, psychiatrists, human right activists, Holocaust survivors, and victims of attempted genocide in Bosnia, Cambodia, China and Tibet. Their responses, as varied as

⁴ Wiesel, 17

their experiences of the world, remind us that Wiesenthal's questions are not limited to events of the past.⁵

For the question that Wiesenthal asks, the researcher wonders what he would do. Like Brian Zahn he cannot say what he would have done, only what he hopes he would have done. As a Christian he would hope that he would reply in something like this manner to his dying enemy: he could offer him forgiveness on behalf of those who had suffered monstrous crimes at his hands and the hands of those with whom he willingly aligned himself, but he has no right to speak on their behalf. Yet he could tell him that forgiveness is possible. "There is a way for him to be reconciled with God, whose image he has defiled, and there is a way for him to be restored to the human race, from which he has fallen. There is a way because the one who never committed a crime cried from the cross saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."⁶ Because the researcher believes in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he believes that the sins of that German soldier do not have to be a dead end, that there is a way forward into reconciliation. As Brian Zahn writes,

The forgiveness of which I speak is not a cheap forgiveness. It is not cheap because it was not cheap for Jesus Christ to suffer the violence of the cross and offer no retaliation but love and forgiveness. It is not a cheap forgiveness because it requires of your deep repentance, including a commitment to restorative justice for those you have wronged. There is no cheap forgiveness for your sins, but there is a costly forgiveness. If you in truth turn from your sins in sorrow and look to Christ in faith, there is forgiveness a costly forgiveness that can reconcile you to God and restore you to the human race. I cannot forgive you on behalf of others,

⁵ Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*.

⁶ Brian Zahn, *Radical Forgiveness: God's Call to Unconditional Love* (Lake Mary, FL: Passio, 2013), 9.

but on my own behalf and in the name of Jesus Christ. I tell you, Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins.⁷

The researcher has written this paper as an appeal to God and the people of Gambella, especially the Anyuwaa people. He wants to plead with his dear people to forgive those who have wronged them. As he learns from the word of God in the Bible, he believes that God is willing to forgive them and their enemies. He wants his people to think about this: if God is willing to forgive sins through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, who are they to refuse to forgive their enemies?

The Anyuwaa people can learn from what has happened to many nations in other parts of Africa and around the world. South Africa can provide a good example, since they know that it is free today because of what its beloved leader Nelson Mandela did. He determined to forgive the people who believed in Apartheid policies more than human beings and put him in prison for 27 years because of his activities against Apartheid. When he was released from prison, he did not think about avenging himself. He knew that peace would not come from retaliation but peace. Reconciliation and restoration only come from forgiveness. Matthew West wrote of Mandela:

Nelson Mandela is a great example of forgiveness. He was forced to spend twenty-seven years of his life in prison. Why? Because he directed peaceful, nonviolent protests against the South African government and its racist apartheid policies. Since Mandela was clearly a victim of the greatest injustice of apartheid, one might expect him to come out of prison swinging ready to fight for revenge. Instead, he continued in his peaceful push for progress and at age seventy-seven, was elected South Africa's first black president. From there he continued to work to unify South Africans by encouraging reconciliation and forgiveness. The movie *Invictus* is set in the 1990s during Mandela's time as president and as the Rugby World Cup was being played. He saw sports as a way of bringing the country together. In one gripping scene, he encourages the national sports federation, whose members were predominantly black, to support the springboks, a predominantly white South African national team. In the film, Mandela says,

⁷ Zahn, 9.

“Our enemy is no longer the Afrikaner... we have to surprise them with compassion, with restraint, and generosity. I know all the things they denied us. But this is no time to celebrate petty ‘revenge’.”⁸

In the movie *Invictus*, Francois Pienaar, the white captain of South Africa’s Springboks rugby team, wonders aloud to his wife about Mandela. “I was thinking of how you spend thirty years in a tiny cell and come out ready to forgive the people who put you there.”⁹ Mandela himself answered that question in this statement: “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I would still be in prison.”¹⁰ At this point, someone may want to ask, why forgive when you know that injustices were committed against you? I hope that Mandela might answer their question with the example of his forgiveness. He did the right thing that a good leader should do when he forgave his enemies for the sake of peace, reconciliation, restoration, and true democracy in South Africa. Now, the Anyuwaa can see the fruit of his good decision to forgive his adversaries. But they still have questions about injustice.

Some of the Anyuwaa are still dealing with how to handle injustices. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ provided them with clear instructions. “If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also” (Luke 6:29 NIV). But the Lord Jesus Christ did not stop at merely telling people what to do; He showed them how to do it. His last days were riddled with one injustice after the other, but he did not fight back. When an angry crowd arrived with Judas to

⁸ Matthew West, *Forgiveness: Overcoming the Impossible*, (Thomas Nashville, Tennessee Nelson, 2013) 42-44

⁹ *Invictus*, directed by Clint Eastwood, JMDbPro, 2009

¹⁰ *Invictus*, 2009

arrest Jesus, Scripture says that His disciples asked, “Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords.” Then, “one of them struck at the high priest’s slave, slashing off his right ear.” What did Jesus do? He said, “No more of this.” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him (Luke 22:49-51 NIV).

“Christians are called not to fight for justice, but to show restraint in the face of injustice. They are not to lash out with angry words in their defense; they are to respond peacefully or even remain silent, as Jesus did.”¹¹ They must believe that God is the justice maker, not them. They are called to the work of forgiveness and grace. The Lord Jesus Christ wants them to forgive others, and as they forgive others, they are allowing God to act on their behalves.

Well-known Christian author Philip Yancey writes, “By forgiving another, I trust God that He is a better justice-maker than I am leaving in God’s hands the scales that must balance justice and mercy.”¹² Christians have to forgive those who wrong them if they want the world to see Jesus. Then no matter how unfairly they are treated, no matter what injustice is done to them, they must keep Jesus’ example front and center in their heart and mind every single day. They must put away their sword and ask God for the strength to follow Jesus’ example and surprise the world with compassion, grace, love and forgiveness. That is what many Tutsis who survived the Rwandan massacre have done to the murderers. They have forgiven many Hutus. One of the Tutsis who survived the Rwandan genocide is Immaculee Ilibagiza, who assures us that forgiveness is the best solution and can take us to freedom.

¹¹ *Invictus*, 2009.

¹² Philip Yancey, *What’s so Amazing about Grace?*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997) 95-96

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddle back Church in California and author of the book *The Purpose Driven Life*, writes about Immalulee's story. Out of the ruins of the 1994 Rwanda genocide have come the most astounding and moving stories of faith, hope, forgiveness, reconciliation and miracles that I have ever heard. If you have had a hard time letting go of a deep hurt, or difficulty in releasing your offender so you can get on with the rest of your life, Immalulee's story can lead you to the place of healing, restoration, and peace. Reading her two books, Immaculee helps the researcher to think deeply again about the Anyuaks massacred in Gambella. He feels good about writing this project because he is not alone.

Immaculee Ilibagiza has written two books about her survival from the Rwandan genocide: *Left to Tell: Discovering God amidst the Rwanda Holocaust*, and *Led by Faith: Rising from the Ashes of the Rwanda Genocide*. In *Left to Tell*, she tells the story of how she survived while her parents and brother were killed.¹³ In her second book, she talks about her faith in God, her forgiveness, and the freedom she has gained from forgiving the people who killed her parents.

Immaculee was hurt by the atrocity that the Hutu tribe committed against Tutsis. She writes, "How could I explain the story of Rwanda about how the people I'd trusted all my life – neighbors, teachers, and friends had turned into monsters more terrifying than any nightmare I would ever have."¹⁴ The researcher agrees! It is a hard, emotional story. She has had to be strong in the Lord to do what she has done. How could she

¹³ Immaculee Ilibagiza with Steve Erwin, *Left to Tell: Discovering God amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House Publishers, 2006).

¹⁴ Immaculee Ilibagiza with Steve Erwin, *Led By Faith: Rising from the Ashes of the Rwanda Genocide* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House Publishers, 2008), 2.

explain what happened to the Tutsis, including her parents, to her daughter? The atrocity overwhelmed her imagination. It was an unimaginable tragedy, but God helped her to live by faith, not by sight. If she had not put her faith in God, the bitterness, grudge, and resentment would have ruined her heart and her life. If she had held on to the wickedness of those wicked people who killed her parents and brother, she would be carrying their pain in her heart every day and night.

The researcher wants you to visualize that while Tutsis, including her family, were being killed, Immaculee hid with other women in the bathroom of a Hutu pastor. Yet she forgave the killers.

From the moment I entered that bathroom, I clung to the red and white rosary my Father have given me as a parting gift. That rosary became my lifeline to the Lord, and I prayed with it frequently, begging to be spared from rape and murder. But my prayers lacked power because I continued to hate the killers for what they were doing. The more I prayed, the more aware I became that, in order to receive God's true blessing, my heart had to be ready to receive His love. But how could he enter my heart when it was holding so much anger and hatred? I said the Lord's Prayer hundreds of times, hoping to forgive the killers who were murdering all around me. It was no use every time I got to the part asking God to "forgive those who trespass against us," my mouth went dry. I couldn't say the words because I didn't truly embrace the feeling behind them. My inability to forgive caused me even greater pain than the anguish I felt in being separated from my family and it was worse than the physical torment of being constantly hunted. After weeks of continual prayer, God came to me one night and touched my heart. He made me understand that we are all His children and therefore all deserving of forgiveness. Even those who had done thing as wicked and depraved as the killers who were ripping Rwanda apart deserved forgiveness. Like naughty children, they needed to be punished... but they also needed to be forgiven.¹⁵

If Immaculee could forgive her parents' killers, the Anyuwaa people can forgive their loved ones' murderers too. By God's grace and the power of God's love, they can forgive their enemies. They need to forgive them because God forgives them anyway. Immaculee is not the only person who has forgiven her family's killers. Sokreaksa S.

¹⁵ Ilibagiza, *Led By Faith*, 69

Himm from Cambodia has forgiven his family's killers too. In his book *After the Heavy Rain*, Sokreaksa tells the story of his whole family, father and mother and siblings, being murdered by the Cambodian military. He was also on the scene but survived and went to Canada. He received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He went to seminary and went back to Cambodia to forgive his family's killers. He found them and forgave them. Now Sokreaksa is back in Cambodia, teaching at a Bible college and planting churches. Oh, what a true, practical, vivid story of real and radical forgiveness! The Anyuwaa people need Sokreaksa's example of forgiveness to be a pathway for them.

The Anyuwaa can also learn from gracious people like the Amish who forgave Charles Carl Roberts. If they could forgive him after he murdered five schoolgirls on October 2, 2006 near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, the people of Gambella can forgive those who have murdered our loved ones too. Allowing forgiveness to purge the non-forgiveness from their hearts is what enables them to move beyond injustice and not be chained to the poisonous cycle of a life for a life. They don't need the bitterness of unforgiving hearts. They need free and healthy hearts where the Holy Spirit of God abides. They need to ask for and seek God's help. It is good to discipline themselves to say, "Oh God, forgive us, as we forgive those who wrong us."

Adam Hamilton writes, "If we can't bring ourselves to say, 'I forgive you,' life will be filled with bitterness and pain."¹⁶ The researcher pleads with the people of Gambella to seek God's forgiveness and forgive those who have wronged them. Seeking forgiveness can lighten your load, set you free and restore you to a right relationship with God and others. As the Psalmist attests, "The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow

¹⁶ Adam Hamilton, *Forgiveness: Finding Peace through Letting God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 2.

to anger and rich in love” (Psalm 145:8 NIV). The choice is for everyone. They can continue to carry the burden of pain and the hurt of non-forgiveness or they can allow the Lord to take it from them and set them free, as He wants. Like Amish people who take grace and forgiveness as the pathway for their lives, the researcher wants to plead with the Anyuwaa people to please choose grace and forgiveness, and let love be the pathways and pillars of our lives. The researcher knows it is not easy, but God is for them if they are willing to choose His beloved Son Jesus Christ’s pathway of forgiveness.

The researcher has shared stories of wounded people who went through the tragedy of death when their loved ones were murdered. Yet by God’s grace, forgiveness, and love, and with hope for the good of humanity and community, they let go of the pain, embraced hope, and let that hope carry them into their future. If they have done this by the grace of God, the people of Gambella can too. This is a petition for God’s forgiveness in Gambella. Yes, the researcher understands that the deep wounds and severe pain are real, but he wants raw truth and steadfast hope to pour out into the hearts of the individuals and ethnic groups of Gambella. Please ask God to forgive you, and forgive each other, he pleads!

The focuses of this paper is to encourage, support, and pray with and for the people of Gambella who have experienced tragedies, reminding them to make a petition to God in prayer, hoping that the God of mercy and grace will hear their petition and heal their hearts and their land.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the research finding and analysis, the following recommendations are proposed by the researcher and the focus group discussion as the basic tools to curb the ethnic conflict among the Anyuwa, Nuer and highlanders in the region of Gambella. They are made as a warning against the possible recurrence of violence in the future if the Gambella communities fail to recognize the issues at stake. If the researcher had to do research again,

- The researcher recommends that ethnic groups continue to explore sustained dialogue and openly discuss their differences and similarities in order to build consensus and live a peaceful life. Such open discussion can be the basis of a peace initiative that grows from tribal circles to ethnic groups, and to all the communities of Gambella. The researcher would conduct more workshops and seminars on reconciliation, peacemaking, and spiritual harmony in the churches and community centers.
- Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms should be included in the peace talks and processes. A traditional reconciliation process called “gurtong,” which most Nilotic tribes are familiar with, should be practiced again among the indigenous people of Gambella. “Gurtong” is a phrase, not a word. It consists of two words: the verb “gur,” and the noun “tong.” “Gur” means “to grind,” or “to blunt,” and “tong” means “spear.” So “gurtong” means “to blunt the spear,” by grinding the sharp edges against something hard until they are blunted. The words and phrase have their origins in most Nilotic languages: Acholi, Jieng, Nath, Chollo, Pari and Anyuwa. However, its symbolic meaning associated with peacemaking has been

perfected and commonly applied by the Anyuwaa in settling serious disputes among members of their ethnic community and between themselves and others. To them, therefore, “gurtong” means to perform a ritual in which a spear is blunted by rubbing its edges against stone.

This was traditionally done to bring peace between ethnic groups. It follows a code in which there is acceptance of guilt, cleansing, compensation, forgiveness and therefore reconciliation. The occasional ritual of “gurtong” involves a ceremony in which two parties in a conflict settle a dispute in which lives have been lost through peaceful discussions. The blunting of a spear symbolizes forgiveness and reconciliation.

- The researcher encourages the government of Ethiopia to organize national forgiveness and reconciliation in Gambella, Ethiopia for all ethnic groups.
- The researcher would do more research on villagization, displacement, and the internal resettlement program of the government of Ethiopia

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

For each of these statements, choose the number from the scale that best describes how you feel about that statement.

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Undecided 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age:

What is your ethnic identification?

- Anyuwaa
- Nuer
- Amhara
- Oromo
- Majanger
- Other

What is your religious affiliation?

- Evangelical
- Catholic/Orthodox
- Protestant
- Animist
- Agnostic
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Other

1. I tend to be a forgiving person.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

2. Forgiveness is as beneficial to the person who forgives as it is to the person who is forgiven.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

3. I stick on the biblical phrase that says, “Tooth for tooth, eye for eye”. You hurt me, I hurt you too so that you must taste the same pain you made on me.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly

4. Some misdeeds are so horrible that forgiveness is out of the question.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly

5. I intend to expect the worst in others people.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly

6. I tend to be an unforgiving person.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly

7. There is a lot of truth in the old expression: “Revenge is sweet.”

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

8. If someone wrongs me, sooner or later I will try to make him or her pay for it.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

9. People must face the consequences of their mistakes, but they should also be forgiven.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

10. If someone wronged me, I cannot have peace of mind until I revenge and hurt my offenders.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

11. If someone wrongs me, I tend to hold a grudge.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

12. I find it difficult to forgive others even when they apologize.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

13. Forgiveness is a sign of weakness

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

14. I often see wrongdoers with anger/ when I see someone who hurt me, I sometimes feel anger.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

15. Forgiving someone who has hurt you or harmed you only encourages them to do it again.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. undecided
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Can you forgive and be good to people when they have treated you badly?

1. I would never forgive them
2. I would forgive them if they come to me and confess their sin
3. I would forgive them even though they do not repent

Do you believe that people who have done you wrong, they truly hurt themselves more than they hurt you?

Yes or No

Do you know that when you refuse to forgive, you are being doing disobedience to God's word?

Yes or No

Some people among the Highlanders of Ethiopia who live in Gambella had done wrong by killing their fellow citizen Anyuwaa Ethiopians in Gambella on December 13, 2003, but right now they needed forgiveness, acceptance, and healing.

1. Agree
2. Disagree

Do you know that if you keep on a resentful attitude, an angry, bitter, and refusing to forgive, you will be the one who suffers for it?

1. Agree
2. Disagree

What can we do to keep peace in Gambella?

1. Forgive
2. Reconcile
3. Loving each other
4. Seeing each other with equality eyes
5. All of the above

What are the most important problems facing Gambella that the government Ethiopia should address and solve?

APPENDIX C: MORE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

1. After I have learned a lesson on forgiveness, I feel I can forgive my wrongdoers but I still hate them.

Disagree
Agree

2. After I have learned a lesson on forgiveness, I still am holding on grudges, bitterness, resentment, and anger in my heart toward wrongdoers.

Disagree
Agree

3. After I have learned a lesson on forgiveness, I am still want to revenge.

Disagree
Agree

4. I can forgive my offenders but I don't love and trust them anymore

Disagree
Agree

5. I completely forgive my offenders and I love and trust them.

Disagree
Agree

6. I never forgive my offenders

Disagree
Agree

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