

Pressezentrum

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Zeit, Ort:	Fr. 09.30 – 10.30, CityCube, Ebene 1, Halle A5, Messe Berlin, Charlottenburg (594 E1)
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Overcoming Monopolistic Privatization and Restoring Kenotic Interdependence Through Healing and Reconciliation

An Opening Remark: Reading the Narrative of Esau and Jacob from the Perspective of Human Avarice

The biblical scriptures deal with the narratives of conflict, healing, and reconciliation occurring in the correlated relationships among God, human, and nature. In Genesis, the kenotic interdependent order of God's creation was distorted and broken because of human's 'disobedience' to God. As a result, alienation as an existential reality of separation from and discontent with God, human, and nature has been spread over the world, and the whole interdependent human community has been turned into a conflictive and competitive society. By exploiting the nature, human has been furthermore destroying the ecological web of the earth household itself.

The root cause of all these three dimensional conflicts – spiritual, social, ecological – is deeply related to human avarice. "For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – come not from the [God] Father but from the world." (1 John 2:18). "For the love of money [that is human avarice] is a root of all kinds of evil." (1 Timothy 6:10) Human avarice keeps on motivating and stimulating the personal and collective will of monopolistic privatization which breaks down the two principles of sustaining the oikoumene, that is, kenosis, meaning self-emptying, and interdependence. All living beings inhabited in the broken and wounded web of life are now crying for healing and reconciliation, hoping to overcome the way of monopolistic privatization and to restore the way of kenotic interdependence by integrating justice and peace for the fullness of life for all.

This morning, in dealing with the concise narrative of Esau and Jacob in Genesis 25–33, my presentation will consist of the three interrelated parts: first, Esau and Jacob's struggle for the birthright from a perspective of human avarice; second, the Jacob's struggle with Laban during his exile to Haran from a perspective of monopolistic privatization; and third, the reunion of Esau and Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok River from a perspective of healing and reconciliation. In each part, I will provide historical and contextual perspectives and interpretations of the biblical narratives. At the final stage, we will have a self-regulating group reflection on the issues with 3–5 persons together in each group.

Part I: Genesis 25 to 28

Perspective - An Apocalyptic Reality of Human Avarice: A History of Human Conquest of Life from Columbus to Globalization

In the Columbus and post-Columbus history, the Western initiatives of 'openness' did not always mean mutual acceptance based on a kenotic interdependence, but more often forceful, uninvited invasions, i.e. the conquests of 'otherness' with the will of monopolistic privatization. The 'West' hard heartedly took over the sustainable space and time of various first nations, 'cleansed' them of their diverse ethnicity with the 'rape' of nature and broke down their interdependent web of life. It was just a starting point of the Western expansionism as the collective expression of the will of dominance of the Western civilization rooted in human avarice. Since then under the consecutive decades of colonial, neo-colonial, Cold War, and globalization subjugation there have been more than 500 years of conquest and dominance by all means: economic and ecological exploitation, socio-political oppression, patriarchy, racism, contagious diseases, ethnic cleansing, enforced religious conversion, genocide, antagonistic division of nations, nation state violence, end of history, globalization of neo-liberal market economy system, clash of civilization, war on terror, barrier of protectionism etc.

After the Cold War Era, the world order has been reshaped by the globalization of neo-liberal market economy system which has become the complex venue where all living beings in the web of life have been turned into

commodities and slaves of human avarice. Globalization is a strategic process of monopolistic privatization driven by the logic of corporate profitability, and a transnational 'corporatization' of the world. Globalization is incompatible with ecological sustainability, and it becomes one-way traffic driven by human avarice dashing down to the total breakdown of the deep sustainability of the earth household.

Global Climate Change as one of the fatal results of globalization has been used as the clue to promote the 'nuclear renaissance,' promoting the nuclear energy as a green solution to GCC and a green alternative to fossil fuels. In spite of the existing reality of the nuclear victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl, Fukushima etc., the journey of human avarice from Hiroshima to Fukushima has been a journey of 'cognitive dissonance'; it has dissolved the memories of nuclear disasters into nuclear armament competition and nuclear renaissance, instead of sublimating them into the "world without nuclear."

God of Life gives us a critical warning against and challenge to the "Brave New World" motivated by human avarice; the BNW is a world modifying God's creation by genetic fabrication as if it is a machine, producing greenhouse gases by over-production, over-consumption, and over-disuse, and stealing 'the fire of heaven' by nuclear fission. As stated in Deuteronomy 30:15–20, God set before us life and prosperity, death and destruction, life and death, blessings and curses, and command, "Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God!"

Biblical Narrative – Esau and Jacob's Struggle for the Birthright in a Patriarchic Tribal Society

The Book of Genesis 25 to 28 speaks of the mortal conflictive relationship between Esau and Jacob, focusing on Esau's loss of his birthright to Jacob and the inherited conflict that have been being spawned among their descendant nations. Because of Jacob's deception of his father, Isaac, in order to grasp Esau's birthright and blessing from him, the kenotic interdependence between Esau and Jacob as the twins was ruined, and the will of struggle for monopolistic privatization replaced it. As a result, Jacob had to live out a painstaking life in the darkness of exile and suffering; hatred of his brother Esau, deceptions of his father-in-law Laban, violent and injurious struggle with a mysterious being at the ford of the Jabbok River, near attack by armed forces of Esau, early death of his favorite wife Rachel, apparent death of his son Joseph, rape of his daughter Dinah, enmity of people of Canaan on account of his sons' slaughter of Shechemites etc.

The society in which Esau and Jacob were born was a patriarchic tribal society maintained by a monopolistic system such as monotheistic faith and order, androcentric polygamy, birthright of firstborn, right of blood etc. In such a social system, the birthright may cause a mortal conflict among the sons, the wives, and even the parents. The scenes of the birthright in the narrative show us Jacob's deceptive nature and behavior to vehemently desire to seize the favored and sacred position of firstborn in the family. Facing an inequality at the starting line as the second-born, Jacob must realize that there was no other way to gain the authority and wealth of his patriarchic tribal society than to usurp the birthright from Esau. Jacob eventually inflicted a fatal wound on his brother that may never heal. As Rebekah, Jacob's mother, noticed Esau's murderous intention towards Jacob, she made him flee to Haran to the house of her brother Laban. Rebekah convinced Isaac to support Jacob's exile so that, unlike Esau who married the Hittite becoming a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob could marry a woman from their own clan.

The biblical history further tells us that the contest between Esau and Jacob repeated itself in the rivalry between Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, and hence continued in the next generation, between the two sons of Rachel whom Jacob loved most, and the ten sons of Leah and the two maidservants under Leah's control. The pattern of Jacob's descendants dividing into 'ten-plus-two' continued even into the division between the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom and the two tribes of Judah.

From a perspective of hermeneutics of suspicion, the narrative of Esau and Jacob may be seen as explaining the ancient enmity between the two tribes, Israel and Edom. The unflattering portrayal of Esau, who sold impulsively his birthright for a pot of red lentil stew, may be another way of expressing Israel's malice against Edom. In spite of Esau's forgiveness of Jacob, Edom had not been forgiven by Israel for its siding with their enemies in several wars, and never recovered from the Assyrian invasion. The narrative of Esau and Jacob was used to justify Israel's dominance over Edom on the grounds that "the elder will serve the younger" as revealed in God's oracle during Rebekah's pregnancy (Genesis 25:23); and "Be lord over your brother" as declared in Isaac's blessing to Jacob. (Genesis 27:29) After all, Jacob, Israel, had been described as the blessing and superior.

Human avarice embedded in the birthright conflict between Esau and Jacob has been reproducing a never-ending enmity among the descendent of the two 'imagined' nations and civilizations in the course of globalization; they have historicized oral traditions and narratives for the sake of their own monopolistic privatization, creating civilizational phobia against each other. In this light, we may critically reflect on today's mortal enmity between the State of Israel and the Arab nations, particularly on Palestinians' struggle with the State of Israel. And from a viewpoint of the Jacob's historical and cultural 'superiority' and his kind of will of dominance spawned in the

Western civilization and its imperialism, we may reflect on Asian people's suffering, particularly on the Korean people's life-long, tripled suffering due to the 36-year Japanese colonialism, the 72-year ongoing division of the Korean Peninsula, and the course of globalization.

Part II Genesis 29 to 31

Perspective – The Confrontational Ways in the Oikoumene: Kenotic Interdependence versus Monopolistic Privatization

The cognitive distortion that afflicts modern humanity derives from the anthropocentric worldview. As an inevitable historical consequence of the anthropocentric conditioning, the driving forces of globalization have deteriorated God's kenotic interdependent way of life-giving economy into Mammon's monopolistic privatizing way of death-dealing economy. Today's global power structure of the transnational *oikoumene* and its enigmatic ambiguity can be characterized as a closed system of domination and dependence, a system militarily secured, geo-politically administered, geo-economically organized, and genetic-scientifically devised; it obeys the logic of power based on the rule of monopolistic privatization deeply rooted in human avarice.

On the contrary, the biblical perception of the *oikoumene* proves to be a liberating impulse sprung from the totality of relationships rather than structures. This is a life-giving interaction based on the principle of kenotic interdependence rather than a death-dealing autonomous law based on the rule of monopolistic privatization. In the ecologically interdependent structure of the household of the *oikoumene*, there is always a harmonious duality between boundary and openness, independence and relationship etc. The notion that "Being-in-relationship is as much a part of our nature as being-in-oneself" requests each entity of the web of life to cooperatively overcome the rule of monopolistic privatization by circulating and sharing its own energy and resource in the relational web of life in a kenotic way with a deep awareness of interdependence.

Biblical Narrative – Between the Exiles: Laban and Jacob's Struggle for Monopolistic Privatization

The Book of Genesis 29 to 31 narrates of Jacob and Laban's mutual engagement in monopolistic privatization of human relationship and wealth with human misbehaviors such as deceit, double dealing, trickery etc. Jacob, who deceived his father, was in turn deceived and cheated by his relative Laban. In Haran, Jacob was forced to work for wages as a servant in Laban's household. Laban exploited not only Jacob's labor and his proficiency in animal husbandry but also his life-planning and marriage with Rachel by exercising the power of monopolistic privatization.

In a revengeful response to Laban's exploitation, using a ploy involving clever breeding techniques, Jacob was able to steal all of Laban's fortune and became extremely wealthy. Due to the unexpectedly successful consequence of his efforts for possessing Laban's wealth, daughters and maidservants, and their children in a way of monopolistic privatization, Jacob incited the envy and rage of Laban and Laban's sons. Finally, without informing Laban, Jacob and his family took another exile from Haran to Canaan. Before they left, Rachel even stole her father's household gods, the *teraphim* that represents title deeds to the contested property. En route to the land of his ancestors, Jacob must pass through Edom, the territory of his estranged brother Esau.

The struggle between Laban and Jacob for monopolistic privatization of wealth and human relationship in deceptive ways naturally broke down their kenotic interdependent relationship. Instead of circulating and sharing human and material resources in their relational web of life and of keeping a harmonious boundary between them, they exercised the will of monopolistic privatization. Human avarice embedded in monopolistic privatization denies the ethics of mutual sharing and caring and dries up the well of the spirituality of kenotic interdependence. After all, Jacob and Laban failed to manage their part of the household of the *oikoumene*.

Re-reading the biblical narrative of Laban and Jacob in the light of human avarice of monopolistic privatization, we may critically reflect on the never-ending mortal conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestine. The land of Palestine as the inheritance of Palestinian forefathers was not a people-less wilderness waiting for a nation of a landless state, but an inhabited land with 1.3 million Palestinian Arab people and 0.6 million Jewish people in 1947. The Zionism has not been in moral succession to the victims of the Holocaust; in fact, from the very beginning it compromised with Nazism in order to get its permission to occupy the land of Palestine. Motivated by the various Zionistic myths and visions, the State of Israel has enthusiastically pursued the divide-conquer policy to colonize the Palestine and eventually other Arab nations by tightening the omni-faceted alliance with the USA. The Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestine 'vineyard' in a way of monopolistic privatization has claimed numerous lives in its history of genocide, distorted the rights of both peoples, deepening the mortal conflict between them.

Human avarice unfolded under the consecutive decades of colonial, neo-colonial and Cold War subjugation has also inflicted the fatal wounds on the people in the Korean Peninsula. In 1910 the Korean Peninsula became the Japanese colony on the basis of the Katsura-Taft Agreement between Japan and USA in 1905. In 1945 Korea was liberated from the 36-year captivity of Japanese colonialism, but the 'innocently' suffered Korea, not Japan, was geometrically divided into North and South. The 1945 division was the most reckless compromise between the USA and the former Soviet Union for the sake of their own geo-political dominance in the North East Asia and monopolistic privatization of the Korean Peninsula, based on a short term tactical expediency rather than a long term strategic vision. In the cold war rivalry frame, the Korean people have been mutually suffered from the tragedy of the 3-year Korean War and its collective post-traumatic stress disorder. The Korean War ceased only with the Armistice Treaty, and the tension in and around the Korean Peninsula has been accelerated evermore, destroying the kenotic interdependence between North and South. Painfully analyzing the historical root-causes of the division and the ever-escalating inter-Korean tension, the Korean churches have prophetically denounced the division of the Korean Peninsula as the socio-geopolitical 'original sin' of the Korean people, a collective sin rooted in human avarice for the monopolistic privatization of the *oikoumene*.

Part III Genesis 32 to 33

Perspective – An Ecumenical Mile Stone: Integrating Justice and Peace in the Process of Healing and Reconciliation

The theme of the WCC 10th Busan Assembly, "God of Life, lead us to justice and peace," integrates justice and peace in the reality of life in a most convergent way. Justice and peace are the two inseparably interdependent pillars that sustain the world of life, the *oikoumene*. A peace with no foundation of justice can result in a false and fragile peace; and a justice with no fruit of peace can be degraded into a vicious circle of revengeful violence. An integrating process of justice and peace can only proceed with a process of healing and reconciliation. Without healing and reconciliation there will be no integration between justice and peace, no life giving and no abundant life. Only the ongoing process of healing and reconciliation can sustain the coexistence and integration of justice and peace for life, restoring the spirituality of kenotic interdependence by overcoming the will of monopolistic privatization.

Healing and reconciliation is the way of witnessing to the wholeness and totality of the Gospel in all dimensions. Healing and reconciliation is the core of God's economy of life, and is both spirituality and strategy of God's ministry as seen in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. In the process of healing and reconciliation, the truth leads the way towards justice and peace, becoming the source of the healed and reconciled life community, the community of God's people. All healing and reconciliation is therefore ultimately rooted in God.

The Church as the life-giving community healed and reconciled in Jesus Christ should be able to centripetally live out a God-given unity and 'costly' *koinonia*. And its authenticity must be centrifugally manifested by its kenotic interdependent way of participation in God's ministry of healing and reconciliation outside the gate where the poor, oppressed, marginalized people are crying for healing and reconciliation. This in-and-out process involves a threefold hermeneutical practical circle of *metanoia*, *koinonia*, and mission and *diakonia*, as the sign of the church in the power of the Holy Spirit. We have been called to heal and reconcile the *oikoumene* broken and wounded by human avarice materialized by the way of monopolistic privatization.

Biblical Narrative - The Reunion of Esau and Jacob: Entering into the Process of Reconciliation by Healing the Open Wound

The Book of Genesis 32 to 33 describes of Esau and Jacob's fateful encounter which led them into a process of healing and reconciliation. Feeling extremely precarious at the prospect of the reunion, Jacob was painfully aware of his indiscretion. He was anxious about whether Esau's wound opened by him still be as fresh as the day on which it was inflicted. In great fear and distress, Jacob placed his trust in God and decided to reconcile with his brother. Preparing for the fatal encounter with Esau, Jacob sent the messengers ahead to his brother with bounteous gifts meant to appease Esau's unforgettable memory of the inflicted wound by him.

On that night, after sending his family and possessions across the ford of the Jabbok River, Jacob was left alone, and encountered God so sincerely that he had wrestled with a mysterious being till daybreak. The mysterious being touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched, yet Jacob would not give up, demanding a blessing first. The mysterious being finally declared, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." (Genesis 32:28) Afterward Jacob named the place *Peniel*, meaning "the face of God," saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." (Genesis 32:30)

There are various understandings as to whether this mysterious being might be a man, an angel, God-self citing Jacob's own words, or the guardian angel of Esau himself sent to destroy Jacob before he could return to the land of Canaan. A modern psychological interpretation sees the wrestling as an inner struggle where Jacob must confront his own demons of fear and insecurity. No matter what the mysterious being was, the night at the ford of the Jabbok River was Jacob's painstaking process of *kenosis*, self-emptying, and of restoring the kenotic interdependence with God and Esau. Jacob as "der Einzelne," "the single individual," in front of God, confronted an existential uncertainty and anxiety as a matter of life or death, being honest to God. Jacob's injured hip became the symbol of the healed and reconciled wound in connection with the broken and wounded memory of Esau and Jacob. We may affirm that "Prayer does not change God, but it changes the person who prays." (Kierkegaard)

In the morning, as he approached Esau, Jacob humbled himself and bowed to the ground seven times, signifying his sincere apology for all the mortal hatred between them. At last, the moment of truth came and Esau made the first overture: "Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept." (Genesis 33:4) Their cautious reunion was turned into the most emotional event, and the tension was appeased.

Jacob also asked his family members and slaves to bow down to Esau, and implored him to accept his presents, confessing, "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably." (Genesis 33:10) Jacob, now Israel, saw "the face of God" in the face of Esau who had sworn to kill him. Seeing the face of God in the face of the hostile person can be understood as the witness and evidence to be ready for forgiveness, to enter into an ongoing process of healing and reconciliation, and to restore a kenotic interdependence among God, victim, and wrongdoer. All these are possible because God see us with compassion for haling and reconciliation. In the light of his experience of obtaining the new name Israel at the ford of the Jabbok River, Jacob convinced of God's forgiveness through Esau's forgiveness and of God's grace in Esau's favor.

Although Esau accepted Jacob's bounteous gifts, Jacob did not accept Esau's proposal to accompany him on his way. Jacob preferred that they would go their own separate ways. It must be the time for Jacob to become the leader of a considerable clan in his own right, as befitted the owner of the birthright, and besides, for Esau to become a chieftain of Edom. Closing his exile, Jacob must remember the God of Bethel who appeared on his exile to and from Haran, assuring him, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." (Genesis 28:15) Therefore, for Jacob, Bethel, the "house of God," was the place where he should offer God his faithful thanksgiving and royalty first on his return to the land of Canaan and more than anything else.

Re-reading the narrative of the reunion of Esau and Jacob in the context of the mortal conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestine, we may convince that it should not be the end of the history of the Palestinian 'vineyard' and her people to be stoned to death, divided and conquered one-sidedly by the State of Israel backed-up by the Zionism and the Anglo-Saxon-Jewish alliances. Having a faith in God's ongoing process of healing and reconciliation of the two nations and seeing God's face in each nation's face, we should be able to declare, now is the *Kairos* to end the unholy conflict in the so-called 'holy' land, making freedom from occupation, pulling down barriers in others' property, respecting human lives regardless of their religions and races, and sharing their equal rights. Now is the *Kairos* for Palestinians to have the right of self-determination and not to allow any kind of discrimination, segregation, and restrictions against the Palestinian self-determination movement. Now is the *Kairos* for Jerusalem, as the capital of two nations and a 'holy' city, to be shared by three faith communities, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, becoming an openly and inclusively shared *oikoumene* in terms of sovereignty and citizenship. Now is the *Kairos* for all of us to participate in God's ongoing process of healing and reconciliation, acknowledging past wrongs, understanding each other's anger, seeking forgiveness between communities, repairing a broken land together, and restoring a kenotic interdependence between the two nations and among us.

Re-reading the narrative of the reunion of Esau and Jacob in the context of the division of the Korean Peninsula, we should have a faith in God's ongoing process of healing and reconciliation of the two nations, North and South Korea, seeing God's face in each nation's face. If we see the history of the Korean people from a perspective of the whole narrative of God's salvific action in the world and from a perspective of what God wants for the world, the division is not the end of the history of the Korean people. As the death of Jesus is not the end of the narrative, but a key transition to allow the narrative to come to its genuine fulfillment, the division is a human-induced wilderness which we will, in God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, eventually overcome towards the fulfillment of Exodus, Liberation, and Jubilee. It is in such a faith-setting that the cup of suffering caused by the division can be transformed into the cup of hope for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula, that is, an ecumenical process of healing and reconciliation which restores the kenotic interdependence between North and South as one nation.

Open Conclusion: An Ongoing Process of Healing and Reconciliation for Reconstructing the Kenotic Interdependent Oikoumene

Healing and reconciliation is not an occasional event but a Spirit-leading process in God's mission. A prophetic process of healing and reconciliation contains the principal elements of God's mission such as accompaniment, careful hearing and retelling, hospitality, awakening and change of perspective, being united with the crucified and resurrected Christ, coming to faith and transformation, new hope and new commission etc. The church as the healed and reconciled life-giving community need to provide security, memory, ritual, new hope, and vision of healing and reconciliation for the broken and wounded people to restore the kenotic interdependence.

On the basis of the biblical understanding of the *oikoumene*, we may imagine an *oikoumene* in which the way of kenotic interdependence become the primary nature and rule in life rather than the way of monopolistic privatization. We may hope a life-giving *oikoumene* where human avarice is being cleansed by compassionate love and where the ethics of mutual sharing and caring becomes the organizing principle of economy and ecology. We may weave the web of life in the *oikoumene* in which God's peoples as the life-affirming communities can learn to dwell together with reverence for one another, with the courage to ask hard questions, with the willingness to shatter false images, and with the freedom to imagine the common future. In this regard, regardless of our religions and races, we, as human beings created in God's image, must be able to speak out truth to the principalities of the earthly power, to break the silence surrounding injustice, and to share something for peace, now for Palestine and Israel, for North and South Korea, and for every each broken and wounded part of the *oikoumene*.

I believe, we all want to see the olive trees and the vineyards in the land of Palestine to flourish and grow old as in Israel. I believe, we all want to see the people in North and South Korea to peacefully dwell together in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), neutralizing it literally as a permanent eco-peace park as a world natural heritage and a cell membrane between North and South, gradually extending it to the whole Korean peninsula and to the North East Asia. As the signs of our dream to come true, Palestinian hunger striking prisoners must be released immediately now, and the peace-talk on the Korean Peninsula at the inter-Korean, regional, and global level must start now, suspending all the military exercises including nuclear missile tests, and lifting up all the sanctions against the North Korea.

With these perspectives and understandings, we may sincerely offer mutual hospitality, building the circle of compassionate love by blessing, breaking, and sharing bread with one another at our daily 'Eucharistic' table. A Eucharistic act as an act of seeing God's face in each other's face in a communitarian way requires from us an act of trust. Mutual trust, the risk of believing in one another, is fundamental to human life. Moreover it connects us to God, and humanizes us more deeply and fully. Then we may become self-extending with one another, just as God has been to us. At the end of this great global festival of our faith in Berlin in commemoration of the 500-year Reformation, filled with excitement, hope and even new purpose, I sincerely wish all of us to be transformed from a victim of the monopolistic privatization into a new being of living out the way of kenotic interdependence in which the truth will reign. Amen!

Questions for Group Discussion

1. How has human avarice been expressed, materialized and systematized in the present society where we live in? In what ways can we integrate justice and peace in our society in the captivity of human avarice?
2. In the history of our own nation state, in what ways has the confrontation between the kenotic interdependence and the monopolistic privatization been unfolded and what has been the result of it? In the case of German society how have the confrontational ways of the reunification process manifested and what kinds of solutions have been made for reconstructing a kenotic interdependent German *oikoumene*?
3. In what ways can we see the face of God in the face of the marginalized people outside the gate who are crying for healing and reconciliation? Do our churches provide safe space and time, accompaniment and hearing, memory and rituals, coming to faith and transformation, new hope and vision etc. for the broken and wounded people to engage in the process of healing and reconciliation?

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