

Xenophobia and Love: Negotiating Reconciliation between South Africa and Nigeria in Light of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21

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Abstract

Scholars of humanities, including those in biblical and theological studies, have extensively explored the issue of xenophobia in South Africa. However, little or nothing has been done from biblical and theological perspectives in terms of hurts, especially among those directly affected like Nigerians. Therefore, this paper (re)examines xenophobia from biblical and theological contexts by exploring 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 to negotiate a reconciliation between South Africa and Nigeria. Drawing on the concepts of love and reconciliation in the chosen texts, this paper argues that the violent xenophobic attacks in South Africa are manifestations of hate (lack of love), and as such love is a site for the negotiation of reconciliation and the representation of true African kinship. It also, shows how Nigerian immigrants in South Africa were directly affected like the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans among others and how the hurts can be calmed through the appeal of love. Data for this interdisciplinary study was gathered from the corpora of media reports on xenophobia in South Africa, especially as it affects Nigerians. Moreover, existing literature in the field and the selected texts (2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21) will be interrogated using the African method of biblical criticism (the evaluative approach). The research will add to the discourse of reconciliation/love theology and Pan-Africanism. Besides, humanities scholars will appreciate how love and reconciliation can bring back the original African kinship to the Church and society.

Keywords: Xenophobia, Hate, Love, Reconciliation, South Africa and Nigeria, African kinship

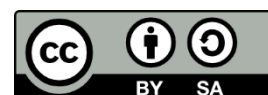
1. Introduction

During the violent xenophobic attacks in South Africa, a lot of immigrants of African descent including Nigerians were seriously hurt. This no doubt has created breakdown of relationships irrespective of religious affiliations. In the background to the theme of the May 2022 academic Conference hosted by the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria entitled “Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity”, my attention was keenly drawn by the way the organisers captured the introduction. It goes like this:

The theme ‘Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity is directly inspired by 2 Corinthians 5:14 and draws on the very heart of the gospel that offers to the world the depths and wonder of the love of God the Holy Trinity. It is rooted in God’s design for the unity and reconciliation of all, a design made visible in the incarnation of the love of God in Jesus Christ. The conference provides an opportunity to reflect profoundly on the meaning of Christ’s love –

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and to find ourselves, and the love we...receive and offer, renewed and reimagined through Christ's loving gaze. The love of God revealed in Christ: love that is redemptive, self-denying, and sacrificial, as well as practical and active in bringing change for the good.... Recent years have seen a turn in the world toward self-centeredness and separation rather than unity, toward localism rather than the universal and international, and an increased value placed on difference and identity rather than on the oneness of all humanity. The world groans in pain because there is violence between peoples, because there are so many refugees and landless or persecuted peoples, because women and children suffer violence, and because so many are hungry and vulnerable and afraid.... The theme of the conference is a song of praise for the God whose love, in Christ, moves Africa. It is a statement of belief and trust that it is 'the will of God to move Africa by love to reconciliation and unity.' It is a message to the world about the love that is the heart of the Christian faith. 'It is an invitation to the churches and to all people of goodwill across the world to share in the common wisdom of love to move us all to be reconciled and to find our true unity as humankind (Conference Flyer, 2022).

The organisers went further to unveil some pivotal questions which I find very interesting. One of such questions aroused my interest in contributing this paper. It says: "responding to the challenges of our times,...what in the life of Africa, in these times, challenges our faith, our witness, and our search for the unity of Christians and the unity of humankind...? (Conference Flyer, 2022)".

The answers are not far-fetched. One of the issues that has been causing discord among the people of the African continent is part of what I think this conference is giving us an opportunity to subject to biblical and theological discourse. The issue is hate (lack of love). Hate has manifested itself in xenophobia in the soil of Africa and as such African nations are Afraid and do not trust each other. This is not only a challenge to our diplomatic relationships but also to our faith, our witness, and our search for the unity of Christians and the unity of Africa. Examining the South African episodes of xenophobia with the spectacle of Christianity, especially in light of the texts (2 Corinthians 5: 18-21 and 1 John 4:16-21), I discovered that love and unity were and are still absent. One of the pieces of evidence of lack of love and unity in Africa is 'hate' which has been manifesting itself in violent xenophobic attacks, especially in South Africa. These attacks were usually perpetrated against fellow Africans including Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, and Nigerians among others.

This issue has also been copiously discoursed in scholarship. For instance, Rothney Tshaka has noted that the word xenophobia in South Africa "is a wrong designation to describe the antagonism directed towards non-South African blacks in the so-called xenophobic attacks that have erupted sporadically in South Africa since 2008" (Tshaka, 2016). Tshaka went further to call it Afrophobia because the attacks have been specifically directed towards fellow Africans not all foreigners in South Africa. Looking at it from another angle, Devan Pillay, Alon Skuy, and Paul Verryn note that seeing "xenophobia as an issue of 'identity' ('South Africans hate foreigners' or 'South Africans hate African foreigners') is misleading..." (Devan Pillay, Skuy, & Verryn, 2018). Also, Zorodzai Dube drawing from "the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, Daniel Trotter, Christian Fuchs, Zizi Papacharissis, Yochai Benkler, and Christian Fuchs to investigate the use of social media as a platform to express ideas against xenophobic-related attacks in South Africa (April 2015-May 2015)" (Dube, 2015), submits that most social media reports that berated xenophobia in South Africa did on the basis of "moral and ethical issues - issues that define our collective as human beings and tackles xenophobia from the perspective of ethics and shared human values" (Dube, 2015). Also, some scholars have approached the issue of xenophobia in South Africa from sociological, political, ethical and even economic perspectives (Hickel, 2014; Okyere-Manu, 2016; Akinola, 2018; Kanayo et al., 2019; Nkwede, 2019; Yahaya, 2020). Moreover, scholars have discoursed xenophobia from South African and Nigeria's perspectives as well (Olaniyi, 2009; Ebenezer & Samuel, 2018). This subject matter has also been discoursed from ecclesiastical and theological perspectives. Notably, Jerry Pillay has opined that the level and dimension racism and xenophobia have reached in South Africa, especially in recent times should be a serious basis for the "Church to get more deeply involved in the creation of racial harmony and peace as it works towards the fullness of life

for all people" (August, 2005; Bedford-Strohm et al., 2016; Pillay, 2017). However, in spite of the impressive body of existing literature on the theme of xenophobia, as it concerns South Africa, little or nothing has been done from biblical and theological perspectives in terms of how it affects relationships in the continent of Africa, especially among those directly affected like Nigerians.

Therefore, this paper (re)examines xenophobia from biblical and theological contexts by exploring 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 to negotiate a reconciliation between South Africa and Nigeria. Drawing on the concept of love and reconciliation in the chosen texts, this paper argues that xenophobia (intense fear or dislike of foreign people [fellow Africans in this case]) in South Africa is a manifestation of hate (lack of love), and as such love is a site for the negotiation of reconciliation and the representation of true African kinship. Gathering data from the corpora of media reports and existing literature on xenophobia in South Africa, it also, shows how Nigerian immigrants were directly affected like the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans among others and how the hurts can be calmed through the appeal of love. How can the space of reconciliation be created by biblical and theological scholarship for the two big brothers (Nigeria and South Africa) among African nations? Using a new African biblical criticism approach (the evaluative paradigm), the biblical texts are critically analysed in the light of the contemporary context of interpretation, and lessons are deduced for African reconciliation and kinship (especially Nigeria and South Africa). The evaluative paradigm according to Justine Ukpong, seeks to understand the biblical message against the background of African life, thought, and practise (Ukpong, 2006). Scholars have previously used this model in their variants in African biblical criticism (see for instance, Pobe, 1979; Manus, 1985; Mbiti, 1992; Ukpong, 1994; Abogunrin, 2000). The evaluative approach will be used here because this paper attempts to consider, among others, (1) how xenophobic attacks in South Africa impacted Nigerians (a fellow African nation), and (2) how the chosen texts depict love as a site for reconciliation and representation of kinship in the Church and human society.

2. Xenophobia in South Africa (2008, 2015, and 2019)

Xenophobia as a manifestation of hate constitutes a serious challenge not only to our diplomatic relationships but also to our faith, our witness, and our search for the unity of Christians and the unity of Africa. It is so because hate and its demonstration against others are at variant with the tenet of Jesus' love which is the very core of Christianity. Therefore, the texts (2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and 1 John 4:16-21) will be read against the backdrop of xenophobia in South Africa as a contemporary context of interpretation. Here, a brief historical analysis of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in which Nigerians were affected will be given. Although the xenophobic attacks in South Africa also affected Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, and other African migrants greatly, I intend to focus on how it affected Nigerians in particular.

Xenophobic related violence "has been a longstanding feature in post-Apartheid South Africa. Since 1994 tens of thousands have been killed and their businesses destroyed because of their status as outsiders (Onu & Ngwube, 2022)." Although xenophobia could be said to have started in South Africa since 1994, the first widely known attack against immigrants occurred on May 11, 2008 (Oni & Okunade, 2018). On May 11, 2008, there were xenophobic attacks in South Africa, particularly in the township of Alexandra, in the northeast of Johannesburg (See Note 1; Nieftagodien, 2008: 65-66; Eliseev et al., 2008). In this incident, some South Africans attacked foreign immigrants of African descents like "Mozambique, Somalia, and Zimbabwe, known collectively as *makwerekwere*—a derogatory term for foreigners and onomatopoeia for someone who speaks unintelligibly—a babbling" (Hickel, 2014). In the following weeks, the violence continued unabated in "other informal settlements around Johannesburg, as well as in settlements around Durban and Cape Town ...by angry vigilante mobs comprised mostly of unemployed young males, [in spite] of the efforts of community members and local leaders to stop them (Hickel, 2014; Steinberg, 2008)." This rap of xenophobic

violence caused the death of over sixty foreigners (See Note 2) and the displacement of over one hundred thousand foreigners irrespective of their actual legal status (Hickel, 2014). Most notable among the killings was the Mozambican immigrant Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuavhe who was necklaced with a petrol-filled tire and set ablaze while bystanders (South Africans) laughed in approval (Worby et al., 2008). This attack has been seen by some as occurrences caused by a myriad of factors. As such, a great number of commentators have “identified one important set of factors underlying the violence ... to be increasing difficulties faced by poor people in the land. When asked by journalists why the violence had occurred, residents in these areas referred to issues including crime, lack of work, and lack of housing and basic services” (Gelb et al., 2008). However, some have disagreed that the above reasons were the cause of this very violence. For instance, a South African government official, Essop Pahad disagrees on the ground that “the violence must be the work of a ‘third force’ since South Africa has done more than any other developing country for the poor” (Gelb et al., 2008). Some have also accused foreigners of taking away their jobs but this is also arguable in a sense that by 2007 the population of foreigners in South Africa was just about 2.79% of the total population (Landau & Segatti, 2009). In the 2008 attack, we were unable to ascertain any affected Nigerian. However, by 2008, derogatory and labelled languages expressed through South African slang already surfaced. For instance, Nigerians were called names like “*MaNigeria* and *Broder* (Oni & Okunade, 2018).” While *MaNigeria* denotes the social-geographical origin of the Nigerians in South Africa, my ‘*Broder*’ connotes a caricature of a Nigerian term: “my *broder* from *anoder moder*, [which] literarily means, ‘my brother’ from another mother” (Oni & Okunade, 2018:47). Seeing this from the surface it seems harmless, but it became “hurtful in consideration of the intent of the user and the way it is used” (Oni & Okunade, 2018).” This corresponds to their wider label of foreigners; ‘*Maforeigner*’ and ‘*AmaXenophobia*’, which has “been incorporated into the daily linguistic repertoire of Alexandra residents and has become discrimination labels” (Oni & Okunade, 2018:47), especially against fellow Africans.

On April 15, 2015, there was another outbreak of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in which some foreigners including Nigerians were injured, gruesomely murdered, and their shops looted and set ablaze (Dube, 2015:1-3). This attack was attributed to “the unfortunate statements by the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini, who during one of the festivals in his village bemoans the loss of Zulu morality because of foreigners” (Dube, 2015:1). In his speech, Zwelithini indicted foreigners of “diluting the Zulu culture and compared the foreign nationals to lice that crawl everywhere and, he sees it as the duty of his people to deal with them (Dube, 2015).” This statement triggered the attack which spread from Durban to Gauteng in South Africa. The attack led to the death of about five persons and the displacement of over 20,000 foreigners. This left a devastating consequence on Nigerians in South Africa in the sense that “a reasonable number of Nigerians lost...their homes and businesses, while some, unfortunately, lost their lives” (Niworu, 2018:6). Eventually, it led many foreigners including Nigerians to return to their countries for fear of being killed or made bankrupt (Essa & Patel, 2015). Consequently, many African nations whose citizens were affected reacted by protesting what they felt was inhumanity to fellow humans. Nigeria in particular withdrew its envoys from South Africa, an action condemned by South African officials and supported by some others as a good diplomatic response.

For this same accusation of foreigners, especially fellow Africans taking South African jobs, from March 25 to April 2, 2019, there were xenophobic attacks by South Africans against foreign nationals in the eastern eThekweni municipality (which includes Durban and surrounding towns), an area most heavily populated. In this attack, businesses and homes owned by foreigners of African descent including that of Nigerians were looted and destroyed, during which some foreign nationals were killed and several others seriously injured (World Report, 2020). Counting from March 2018 to April 2, 2019, when this particular episode of xenophobic attacks occurred, over 200 people most of whom were foreign truck drivers were killed. Consequently, many

foreign truck drivers lost their jobs, despite having valid work permits in South Africa. Some others could not return to work due to injuries or severe damages to their trucks (World Report, 2020). Those responsible for this dastardly act claimed to be affiliated to the All Truck Drivers Foundation (ATDF), an association of local truck drivers in South Africa. Apart from the truck drivers, shops and homes of foreigners mostly of African descent were looted and destroyed. In this particular attack, Nigerians were overtly affected such that many of them whose livelihood and homes had been looted and destroyed became stranded and bankrupt. As such, the Chief Executive of Air Peace, Allen Ifechukwu Onyema released his airlines to freely evacuate them from South Africa. By September 10, 2019, at least 640 Nigerians have signed up to be evacuated from South Africa under the Air Peace offer (Reuters Staff, 2019). Besides, those directly affected, some lucky ones who felt unsecured in the midst of South Africans also opted to return home. Although official statistics of death of Nigerians as a result of xenophobic attacks are difficult to come by, the narratives of some of the returnees and government officials show that some Nigerians were attacked with machetes, guns, sticks, and even set ablaze leading to their deaths and in some cases severe injuries. For instance, according to the Senior Special Assistant to a former President (Goodluck Jonathan [2010-2015]) on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora, Mrs. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, says; “no fewer than 117 Nigerians were extra-judicially killed in South Africa between 2016 and 2018 for one flimsy reason or the other” (Vanguard, 2018). This still does not give concrete statistics of the death of Nigerians as a result of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, and we cannot also demise the testimonies of eyewitnesses. In some cases, Nigerian youths resorted to reprisal attacks in which South Africans and their business outlets in Nigeria such as multichoice (DSTV), Mobile Telecommunication Company (MTN), Shoprite, etc facilities became the focus of attacks. Many Nigerians including clerics, government officials, etc have condemned such reprisals and opted for dialogue (Africanews, 2019). All of these xenophobic assaults in South Africa have left a sour taste in the mount of Nigerians. It is against this backdrop we intend to read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 in the context of reconciliation and love for Nigeria and South Africa.

3. Hermeneutics of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21

3.1 Socio-Historical Contexts of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 before us here are two New Testament texts authored by different persons. While the former is attributed to Paul (located in Pauline corpus), the latter is attributed to John (located in the Johannine literature [Johannine epistle in this case]). Here, the socio-historical context of the above passages will be presented.

Looking at Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church community, we can see a “wealth of information about the daily lives of early Christ-followers and ... a glimpse [of]...an ongoing dialogue between Paul and the Corinthian believers” (Hodge, 2021). After Paul’s exit from Corinth, he wrote several letters to the Church community with the aim of answering some pertinent and ethical questions by “arguing for certain positions, and attempting to influence their practices” (Hodge, 2021). Particularly, the Church community was characterised by divisions over spirituality (spiritual gifts-I Cor.12), stratification, sexual immorality, etc. Out of all the letters written to the Church by Paul, two known today as 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Christian canon survived. In both letters, Paul’s main concern as put by Caroline Hodge is “how Gentiles, once transformed by the spirit received at baptism, can live their lives with a new understanding of themselves and the world” (Hodge, 2021). 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 could be located in the context of kinship and conflict, a Church community characterised by contentions and division. Although scholars are in contention about the sequence of Paul’s letter to the Corinthian Church (See Note 3; Gundry, 1970; Taylor, 1991; Hodge, 2021), the canonical second Corinthians reveals tensions between the apostle (Paul) and the church, leading to some kind of apologetic exertion, especially of his genuine apostolic

identity as against allegations made by some self-acclaimed super-apostles who have arisen within the church and who sang their praise of triumphant gospel of success over Paul's message of the cross (Victor Paul Furnish, 1996). According to Taylor N.H., the letter

contains within it texts which, in the view of most scholars, reflect very different circumstances... particularly the state of Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church, and his expectations of his forthcoming visit to Corinth, alluded to at different points in the letter. These discrepancies have led the majority of scholars to regard 2 Corinthians as a composite letter, but they differ in their reconstructions both of the text itself and of the chronology of the component fragments (Taylor, 1991:67; see also, Macdonald, 2007:1134-1135).

Some suggest that Paul made an emergency (sorrowful) visit to the church at Corinth between the time of composition of 1 and 2 Corinthians (Macdonald, 2007:1134; see also, 2 Corinthians 2:1). It is very likely; this was a second visit to the Church community after his first exploit of planting the Church (See 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1). It appears the outcome of the second visit was not pleasant, hence Paul resolved to write a tearful (painful) letter as a follow-up (See 2 Corinthians 2:4; 2:2-11; 7:5-12). Some scholars have "identified this letter with 2 Corinthians 10-13 [but] it is more likely it has been lost" (Macdonald, 2007:1134). The tearful letter seemed to have yielded some positive results which necessitated Paul to write from Macedonia 2 Corinthians 1-9, a letter delivered to the congregation by Titus, though the situation deteriorated again later on leading Paul to write another which some refer to as 2 Corinthians 10-13 (See Macdonald, 2007:1134; See also, 2 Cor.7:5; Cf. 2 Cor.2:12-13; 8:1; 9:2; 7:4-16; Cf 2 Cor.8:17-18 respectively). In this later letter, Paul stated his intention to visit the Corinthians Church community the third time (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1). While the issue or the investigation of 2 Corinthians as a composite of two or more originally separate Pauline letters is not the focus here, it gives us a clue of knowing the *Sitz im Leben* (setting in life) of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 in the first-century Greco-Roman world in which the text was composed or transmitted. At least we have been made to know that our text within the canonised second Corinthians falls within chapters 1-9 of the composite in which Paul seems generally confident about his readers and his conciliatory mood (Furnish, 1994: 205). The other part of the segment or composite of the letter is chapters 10-13 in which we are also made to understand the seeming cause of the quarrel between Paul and the Church. Paul was upset with those in the Church who deliberately discredit his apostleship and teaching of the gospel of the cross. Paul was disturbed that the Church was still facing various contentions and this time around his apostolic identity and authenticity as caused by those he referred to as false apostles were at the centre of the matter. As a result, he did not "hesitate to criticize and threaten them (Furnish, 1994: 205)." Hence, his proposed visit after the cancelled or failed one was a visit of reconciliation. One of Paul's intentions of wanting to visit the Corinthian Church this time around was to come for reconciliation, especially between him and the Church and possibly between the brethren in the Church community.

Looking at the socio-historical context of 1 John 4:16-21, it can be located in the exhortation of love (Burton, 1896). It is very likely that this epistle was penned to Gentile Christians living in the region of Ephesus, a region under first-century Roman Empire. Tradition has it that John the writer was in Ephesus when he wrote this piece. By the understanding of his residence in Ephesus, we can get some clues "to the condition of affairs in that region in the latter part of the first century [but] what the situation was to which the letter addressed itself is in any case quite clear" (Burton, 1896: 367). However, certain issues appear in the text which includes infiltration of the Church by false teachers, heresy (docetism) (Burton,1896), some refusing to confess Jesus as the incarnate, and became indulgent to sin (See Note 4; Boer, 1991:326-327). Apart from docetism, the first epistle of John also confronted Antinomianism (New World Encyclopedia, 2018). The author referred to the peddler of docetism and Antinomianism as false teacher/prophet and by implication Anti-Christ. However, the text in view (1 John 4:16-21) could be located in the scenario of dissenting groups within the Church community of John, though without a well defined geographical location.

It was Jewish Christians versus Gentile Christians within the Christian community most probably located in an unknown Gentile region (Lieu, 2008). Although the particular geographical location is unknown, some scholars suggest “that the Johannine letters were written to a predominantly Gentile readership, and do not use specifically OT language or thought” (Painter, 2008:77-78). Against this understanding, St. Augustine’s commentary on 1 John suggests that Jewish Christians in Parthia (*Parthos*, also referred to as Babylon) were likely the recipient of the letter sometime toward the end of the first-century (Brown, 1955). It seemed the Jewish Christians were already being swayed by the teaching of docetism since the Jews originally find it difficult to come to terms with the deity of Jesus Christ (John 10:22-39). Besides, the Jews do not closely relate with the Gentiles, though they belong to a common community of faith (Gal.2: 11-21). The analogy of Cain’s murder of his own brother Abel in the preceding chapter (1 John 3:11-12), does not only show Jewishness but also the danger of hate. Our text 1 John 4:16-21 therefore, can be located in the context of reconciliation love and admonition against hate among people of the same brotherhood.

3.2 An Exegetical Analysis of Reconciliation and Love in 2 Corinthian 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21

The major theme that pervades the whole of 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 is reconciliation (καταλλαγή) in Christian ministry. The entire pericope (5:11-21) captures ἀγάπη (love) and καταλλαγή (reconciliation) as themes. In verse 18 Paul calls it “διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς (ministry of reconciliation).” The Greek word καταλλαγῆς as used in the text means restoration of broken relationships or reconciliation of feuding parties. Paul uses three analogies to drive home this point. First is his personal redemption experience with Christ on his way to Damascus in which Christ reconciled him to Himself (verses 18-19). In his classic work, *2 Cor. 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul's Concept of "Reconciliation"*, Seyoon Kim buttresses this point, especially in his doctoral dissertation (Kim, 1997). In the thesis put forward by Kim, he submits that the term καταλλαγῆς (reconciliation) is “the unique Pauline metaphor for God’s act in Christ” (Kim, 1997) in which humans like him are reconciled to God through Christ’s atonement for sin (Acts 9 and 2 Corinthians 5: 11-21. Also see, Romans 5:1-10).

The second analogy is the understanding of καταλλαγῆς in Hellenistic literature. Paul probably borrowed this terminology from Hellenistic literature. According to Cilliers Breytenbach, the term reconciliation in the Hellenistic literature refers to reconciliation in interpersonal relationships which were prominently used for peace-treaty processes in the politico-military context (Breytenbach, 1989: 64; Porter, 1994; Kim, 1997: 361). The usage of καταλλαγῆς in connection with πρεσβεύω (ambassador) in verse 20 gives a picture of a person representing a higher authority in another land. This fits into diplomatic understanding of the time. It carries the idea of a representative who is saddled with the responsibility of doing reconciliation in the interest of a king in another kingdom. Noting the “parallelism between the Hellenistic conception of the ‘ambassadors’ (πρεσβει) who are sent to ‘appeal’ (παρεκάλει) to warring parties for reconciliation, and the same set of vocabulary in 2 Cor. 5:20, Seyoon Kim explains this Hellenistic usage of “the καταλλαγῆ... in the diplomatic context to be the background of Paul’s concept of ‘reconciliation” (Kim, 1997:361).

The third analogy is the understanding of καταλλαγῆς as atonement (ἵλασμός) as could be seen in verses 19-21. Although Breytenbach argues that Paul’s usage of καταλλαγῆς has no link with “atonement” language, the text itself is explicit about this. Three possible New Testament words fit into this analogy; that is, ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption), καταλλαγή (reconciliation), and ἵλασμός (propitiation). All of these give the image of “the one without sin who was made sinner for sinners to become righteous through Him (τὸν μὴ γνόντα ἁμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς γενώμεθα δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ)” (Marshall, 1978). This description corresponds with the passion narrative of Jesus Christ in which He died on the cross for the redemption (ἀπολύτρωσις) of sinners. The problem which brought the enmity between God and man for which Jesus died is ἁμαρτία. The Greek noun ἁμαρτίαν as used in the text (verse 21) means transgression or

sin. This concept arose from the primordial disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and had existed till the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for propitiation (ἰλασμός). The description of sin as a state of enmity (ἔχθρα) with God as could also be seen in other New Testament parallels such as (Rom. 8:7; Ephes. 2:15; Jam. 4:4), gives the understanding that sinners are enemies to God and at the same time alienated from Him (Marshall, 1978). This was what necessitated καταλλαγῆ (reconciliation). καταλλαγῆ is also present in intertestamental literature, particularly in 2 Maccabees 1:5; 5:20; 7:32-33; 8:29 where God is understood as being reconciled to his people especially after prayers of repentance from apostasy has been offered to turn away Yaweh's anger (Marshall, 1978; Porter, 1994). In verse 14, Paul gives the understanding that ἀγάπη (love) is the site for καταλλαγῆ (reconciliation). In verse 15, he went further to highlight that it was love that made Jesus Christ to die for all. He then connects ἀγάπη to the entire verses 16-21 with the conjunction ὥστε (therefore) twice in verses 16 and 17. Moreover, Paul made it clear that the imbibed love of Christ by the Christian makes him/her spiritual and a new creation (καινή κτίσις). As such, Christians become representatives (πρεσβει) of Jesus Christ (God) on earth having reconciled them to Himself (Καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ). This makes the Christian and Church leaders to be ministers of peace-building or reconciliation (τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς).

Furthermore, in 1 John 4:16-21, the theme of love is extensively discussed. The Greek word ἀγάπη pervades 1 John 4:16-21, appearing 14 times. Generally, ἀγάπη means unconditional love, goodwill, or benevolence. In verses 16-18, it is used in a noun form (ἀγάπη) and in verses 19 to 21, it is used as verb (ἀγαπῶμεν [present active indicative, we love or we are loving], ἠγάπησεν [aorist, loved], ἀγαπάω [I love v.20-21]). In the text, ἀγάπη is used in the context of kinships (verses 16-21). Two major kinds of relationships were put in perspectives. The first is love in relationship between God and humans (vertical relationship) as could be seen in verses 16-19. The author emphasises in verse 16 that God is love (Θεὸς ἐστὶν ἀγάπη) and as such the person who abides in love abides in God (ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει (See Note 5). John went further to explain in verses 17-18 that God's love in a Christian, makes him/her ἔλειος (a complete person or an ideal Christian) and as such, a replica of God's love on earth thereby excluding the person from κρίσις (judgement). The second is love in relationship between humans and humans (horizontal relationship) as could be seen in verses 20-21. In verse 21, it states that, if a person says s(he) loves God, such a person should also love fellow humans (ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ [the one loving God should also love his brother]). This concept also appears in Leviticus 19:17-18, Matthew 22:39, and Mark 12:31. John calls this in verse 21 ἐντολή (commandment) from God. By implication, any one who claims to love God must love his neighbour (Scholer, 1990: 309). In verse 20, John used μισέω (hate or detest) as the antithesis of ἀγάπη (love) to buttress the understanding that the lack of love is hate. The lack of love will certainly bring fear (φόβος) and distrust (ἀπιστία) in human society, be they Church community or otherwise. Moreover, Dirk Merwe adds that "the verb μένειν [abide] in the Gospel as well as in 1 John [4:16] suggests an intimate and ongoing relationship between God in Christ and the believers" (Merwe, 2017). The Elder also uses the theme of brotherhood (ἀδελφός) in the text to drive home the kinship that must pervade the entire Christian community. The noun ἀδελφός (brother) as used in the text carries the understanding of the Christian's common source of faith or salvation (Jesus Christ), not necessarily consanguinity. Metaphorically, it can also mean neighbours or fellow Christians.

4. Application of 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 in the Context of Xenophobia: Negotiating Reconciliation through love

From the texts, we can deduce that the partway to the negotiation of reconciliation lies in two major factors. The first and most important one is love. The second one is the spirit of brotherhood (fellowship or amity). Love as shown in the texts, is a way of selfless disposition towards others (neighbours) by seeking their good. Another portrayal of love from the text is the disposition of sacrificing for others. The texts also portrayed love

as the deposition of sharing with others. The texts especially 1 John 4:16-21 portrays love as vertical (humans to God) and horizontal (human to human) relationships. Love, especially from the horizontal dimension cannot be devoid of truth. If we must use love to negotiate reconciliation, truth or sincerity must be upheld because no protracted relationship thrives on lies or deceit. Therefore, Nigeria and South Africa must be told the truth because love though should be unconditional, should be practised in truth. Those Nigerians who do drugs, swindling and taking advantage of vulnerable South Africans by taking away their girlfriends should stop this kind of practise. Our South African brothers and sisters who vandalise and murder Nigerians (fellow Africans) should desist from such acts. Moreover, instead of generalising that all Nigerians are bad, those who break the law of South Africa be arrested by the South African authorities and prosecuted for their crimes.

How does this make sense in the issue of xenophobia and its effect on the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa? Reports from social media and existing literature on the field have shown that certain socio-economic issues fuel hatred for Nigerians by South Africans. One of them which has also been captured above is the issue of job. It is believed by those attacking Nigerians and other African foreign nationals that the jobs meant for South Africans are being taken away from them by foreigners or the presence of immigrants, especially Nigerians thereby making jobs in the country insufficient for indigenes. This has been debunked by research and government officials of South Africa in a sense that Nigerians (foreigners) make up a small percentage of the country's population and its social security to its citizens is second to none in Africa. Whether this is correct or not, we must also see the genuine concern of the people. The people need jobs and want to get out of poverty. For me, this is a genuine concern. However, instead of killing foreigners and looting their investments which are supposed to add to the economic development of South Africa, the spirit of love should have made them rather stick to a legal means of identifying illegal migrants and deporting them to their countries. On the other hand, the government of South Africa should only allow needed skilled personnel that are lacking in the labour market to come into their country for the development of their nation.

The second problem identified is a grievance against Nigerians, especially the male migrants. It is alleged that South African ladies like to follow Nigerian males than South African males. So it is believed that the mere presence of a Nigerian guy might make a South African guy lose his girlfriend to him (Akerere & Adebayo, 2021). Although this has not been strongly put forward as one of the causes of the violence against Nigerians in South Africa, it has been confirmed by some of the Nigerians affected by the xenophobic violence. While as Christians we do not encourage girlfriend and boyfriend (fornication) relationships, in the spirit of love, it is advisable for Nigerian single guys in South Africa to consider marriage and if they want South African women, it should be properly done in line with the culture of the people not taking someone else's woman.

The other level of the problem is the killings and the destruction of the businesses and properties of Nigerians by South Africans. This brought huge losses to them in terms of human lives and properties worth millions of Rands. This is a display of hate and it is inhumanity to fellow humans. Nigerians are very sad about it but how do our texts speak to this? One of our texts, particularly 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21 talks about reconciliation (*καταλλαγῆ*). As such, Nigerians should apologise to South Africans, especially those who from whom they took their women and whatever wrong they have done to the nation. South Africa should forgive Nigerians in the spirit of love. Also, South Africans should apologise to and compensate Nigeria, especially the family of those affected by the Xenophobic attacks. Nigerians should also reciprocate by forgiving their brother (South Africa). In the spirit of love and reconciliation, South Africa as a nation should learn to protect the life and properties of every human being in their country. And those, who illegally entered their country, should be legally deported to their country of origin by following diplomatic conventions.

The second partway to the negotiation of reconciliation lies in the spirit of brotherhood (ἀδελφός). Our second text 1 John 4:16-21 emphasises brotherly love. The type of love that keeps kinship afloat among humans is the main emphasis of John's first letter to his original audience. In John's understanding, loving God and loving fellow humans cannot be treated in isolation. As such, the love we show to others goes to show that God is real and dwells in us. This will help the unbeliever to appreciate Christianity more. African brotherhood is so strong. The mere identity of two, three, or more Africans who meet themselves for the first time in a foreign land, especially in the western world see themselves as brothers and sisters. Generally, Africans see themselves as brothers and sisters. Xenophobia is foreign to Africans. Africans share things with their neighbours. John is reminding us of this reality. As such, brotherly love (ἀγαπητός ἀδελφός) should instigate us to reconcile with one another whenever there is a quarrel among members of the family. Usually, in Africa, elders supervise reconciliation between quarrelling brothers and sisters. In this case, the Church and her leaders, and the traditional leaders in Nigeria and South Africa should play this role of the elders always. These elders should come out in a press conference, apologise to one another, and warn our children never to involve themselves in hate both in speech and action. Whenever there is an issue, the government of both nations should always involve these elders to create a dialogue between the dissenting groups to negotiate peace and peaceful coexistence. Besides, African brotherhood should be added to the course curriculum of our universities so as to build the consciousness of true brotherhood. If Nigerians and South Africans for instance truly see themselves as brothers and sisters, chances are that xenophobia will be a thing of the past.

5. Conclusion

This paper has shown how the gruesome xenophobic attacks in South Africa affected Nigerians. It has also shown from the texts (2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21) how the love of Christ in us should drive society to achieve peaceful coexistence and reconciliation among feuding members of the community. This paper has also highlighted how love can become a site for the negotiation of reconciliation and the representation of true African kinship. As such, it has contributed to the discourse of reconciliation/love theology and Pan-Africanism.

Moreover, the negative effect of Xenophobia on African kinship (relationships) at the diplomatic and ecclesiastical levels is also a serious concern in this paper. At the diplomatic level, it brings about reciprocation of action at a proportionate level. This heightens hate by way of hate begetting hate. This kind of trend will deepen hate among African nations in the sense that the nations affected by xenophobia will continue to think of proportionate retaliation. The more this happens the more hurt and disunited people will be in Africa. At the ecclesiastical level, relationships will also be affected in the sense that a lot of the victims of xenophobia in South Africa are members of one Church denomination or the other; one family or the other, one social group or the other. As such the ripple effect is deeper than we can ever imagine because friends, family members, and social groups of the victim will stand in solidarity with the victim. This does not only affect our faith but our evangelism in a world where Christians are supposed to be ministers of reconciliation and the epitome of Christ's love.

Both in Pauline and Johannine corpus, particularly 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and 1 John 4:16-21 we have been challenged, especially as Christians to be agents of reconciliation and love of Christ in our world. On this basis, I wish to recommend that two reconciliation worship services be held; one in Abuja, Nigeria, and the other in Pretoria, South Africa. These services should be organised by the ecumenical leaders of both countries. In each of these services, a message on reconciliation, love, and brotherhood be preached and apologies are exchanged, and a peace pact is made between Nigeria and South Africa. It should be streamed and recorded materials made available online. This will be symbolic of the peace, love, and brotherhood we share together, not only as Christians but as Africans. It will make a lot of meaning for our

evangelism and kinship as a continent. Although this is between Nigeria and South Africa, it will serve as a model to others who were affected too.

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Notes

1. Noor Nieftagodien's et al account of the xenophobic attack in the town of Alexandra on 11 May 2008, he narrated that the attacks were against foreign Africans and that the violence was "concentrated in and around the area known as Beirut, the infamous territory around the hostels that witnessed some of the worst civil violence in the early 1990s. During those three or four days in May, two people in Alexandra (including one South African) were killed, at least 60 injured and hundreds were forcibly evicted from their homes by gangs of armed young men. Several women were raped" (See Nieftagodien, 2008; Eliseev, Skuy, & Verryn, 2008 in ref.)
2. This has also been argued. Some say that some of the people that died were South Africans who were probably mistaken for foreigners during the rampage.
3. Some say that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was missing and as such the one we call first is supposed to be second and second is supposed to be third. Some scholars submit that 2 Corinthians is a composition of two or more letters that may have been merged to form the existing text we know today. Most hypothesise that "the current letter is the product of two texts (chapters 1-9 and 10-13); some suggest as many as five letter fragments. Other scholars argue that these changes in tone are better explained as a rhetorical technique that deliberately alternates between gentle and harsh approaches." Paul could be seen to have use his teaching gift to persuade the Corinthians' community to adjust their behaviour and perspectives.
4. Docetism holds that "Jesus was not himself the Christ, but that the Christ came to him at his baptism and left him before he suffered" (Burton 1896, 367). This teaching is anti-Christian teaching.
5. A parallel of this is also found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and in the gospels (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30).

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